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EAST-WEST RELATIONS IN THE 1980s

By Adam Bromke

May 1988

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PREFACE

This booklet is intended as a primer on East-West relations in the 1980s: presenting the major developments in this decade in the perspective of the entire post-war period, with an attempt to evaluate possible trends for the rest of this century. It is deliberately written from what I believe is the unique Canadian view of world affairs. This is not to be identified with any current and narrow partisan programme, but rather with a long-range position which has been broadly shared by Canadians and by their successive governments.[1] I hope that this booklet may serve as a useful guide for various groups interested in international politics and for the university students of this subject, as a companion to what are usually American-authored text books. To fulfill this educational objective it is deliberately written in as simple a fashion as possible.

I was inspired in writing it by one of the pioneers of political science in this country, James Alexander Corry. He is best known for his seminal works on western democracies--including Canada. But thirty years ago he also wrote a pamphlet on Soviet Russia and the Western Alliance which I read as a young lecturer at McGill University with great interest. It was a remarkably lucid exposition of East-West relations and it articulated the Canadian perspective on them very well. Corry's predictions from 1958, moreover, have proved to be remarkably correct. I hope that, similarly, my booklet will withstand the test of time. I dedicate it to the young Canadians, and particularly to my two sons: Adam and Alek.

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[1] In trying to assess the contemporary Canadians' views on international politics I was re-assured by an article by Don Munton, "Superpowers and National Security, Canadians Don't Think Much of Either Superpower's Policies," Peace&Security, Vol. 2, No. 4, Winter 1987/1988.

I should like to express my gratitude to Executive Director of the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security, Geoffrey Pearson, for his encouraging me to take this assignment. I should also like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for providing me with a grant to visit the United States as well as Western and Eastern Europe to check on my view of East-West relations. Last but not least I am much obliged to my long time collaborator, Lawrence Miller, who has not only improved my style, but in the process of doing so has helped me to clarify my thoughts.

Adam Bromke
February 1988

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Adam Bromke is a professor of political science at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

The opionions expressed in this paper are those of the author, and do not necessarily represent the views of the Institute and its Board of Directors.

PRÉFACE

Le présent ouvrage est un document de base sur les relations Est-Ouest dans les années 1980 et il vise, par conséquent, à dépeindre les faits marquants de la décennie relativement au contexte global de l'après-guerre, tout en cherchant à évaluer l'évolution qu'elles connaîtront probablement d'ici la fin du siècle. Je me suis délibérément efforcé d'écrire en adoptant ce qui, je crois, est le point de vue unique que le Canada a sur les affaires mondiales. Il ne faut surtout pas assimiler mes propos à l'un ou l'autre des programmes actuels dont le caractère est aussi limité que partisan, mais plutôt à une position que l'ensemble des Canadiens et Canadiennes et les gouvernements les ayant successivement dirigés partagent depuis longtemps.[1] J'espère que cet ouvrage constituera un guide utile à divers groupes que la politique internationale intéresse et aux étudiants d'université se penchant sur ce sujet, et qu'il saura compléter d'autres ouvrages produits principalement par des auteurs américains. Afin d'atteindre cet objectif didactique, j'ai délibérément adopté un style simple et dépouillé.

C'est en relisant un ouvrage de M. James Alexander Corry, un des premiers à étudier les sciences politiques au Canada, que j'ai eu l'idée d'écrire le présent document. M. corry est surtout connu pour ses travaux novateurs sur les démocraties occidentales, dont le Canada. Il y a trente ans, il a aussi écrit une brochure intitulée Soviet Russia and the Western Alliance, que j'ai lu avec grand intérêt alors que j'étais jeune chargé de cours à l'Université McGill. Il s'agissait d'un exposé extrêmement lucide sur les relations Est-Ouest et d'une étude qui présentait fort bien la perspective canadienne sur cette question. Qui plus est, les prédictions que M. Corry a faites en 1958 se sont avérées justes dans une proportion remarquable. J'espère que mon ouvrage saura lui aussi résister à l'épreuve du temps. Je le dédie aux jeunes Canadiens et Canadiennes, et plus spécialement à mes deux fils Adam et Alek.

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[1] L'article de Don Munton intitulé La sécurité nationale : qu'en pense la population canadienne ?, qui a paru dans Paix et Sécurité (Vol. 2, numéro 4, Hiver 1987-1988), m'a été très utile quand il m'a fallu évaluer l'opinion de la population canadienne sur la politique internationale.

Je tiens à remercier M. Geoffrey Pearson, Directeur général de l'Institut canadien pour la paix et la sécurité internationales, qui m'a encouragé à exécuter ce travail. Mes remerciements vont également au Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada, qui m'a accordé une subvention pour me permettre de me rendre aux États-Unis ainsi qu'en Europe de l'Est et de l'Ouest, où j'ai pu vérifier la valeur de mon point de vue sur les relations Est-Ouest. En dernier lieu, je m'en voudrais de ne pas mentionner le soutien de mon collaborateur de longue date, M. Lawrence Miller, qui non seulement a amélioré mon style, mais qui, ce faisant, m'a aussi aidé à clarifier mes pensées.

Adam Bromke
Février 1988

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Les opinions exprimées dans le présent ouvrage sont celles de l'auteur et elles ne correspondent pas nécessairement à celles de l'Institut et de son conseil d'administration.

CONDENSÉ

Des événements remontant à l'époque de la Seconde Guerre mondiale expliquent en partie l'évolution des relations Est-Ouest dans les années 1980. En revanche, ce qui se produira au cours de la présente décennie influera sur le caractère que ces relations revêtiront dans les années 1990 et au-delà de l'an 2000. Nous vivons dans un système international caractérisé par la bipolarité, c'est-à-dire par une vive concurrence idéologique entre les deux superpuissances.

À l'ère nucléaire, cette concurrence est restreinte. Les deux superpuissances savent que toute guerre qui éclaterait entre elles entraînerait l'anéantissement de l'une et de l'autre. Lorsque les tensions se sont intensifiées entre elles, elles ont évité tout affrontement militaire direct, mais un climat de guerre froide s'est installé. Quand les relations se sont améliorées, les deux pays ont progressé vers la détente. Au cours des quatre dernières décennies, les relations américano-soviétiques ont cheminé entre les antipodes que sont la guerre froide et la détente.

Au début des années 1980, l'Union soviétique a occupé l'Afghanistan, et un nouveau président mettant davantage l'accent sur l'idéologie a accédé à la Maison-Blanche. Les États-Unis envisageaient de déployer de nouvelles armes en Europe occidentale. Quand la mise en place de ces engins a commencé en 1983, les négociateurs soviétiques ont abandonné les pourparlers sur la limitation des armements. Le début des années 1980 a été une période difficile pour l'URSS, en raison de la fragilité de ses dirigeants. En effet, trois secrétaires généraux sont décédés et se sont ainsi succédés rapidement à la tête du pays. If fallut attendre 1985 avant qu'un chef jeune et vigoureux, nommément Mikhail Gorbatchev, arrive au pouvoir.

Vers le milieu des années 1980, les nouvelles politiques de M. Gorbatchev ont favorisé l'amélioration des relations Est-Ouest. M. Reagan a adopté une attitude plus conciliante à l'égard de l'Union soviétique, et les deux dirigeants se sont réunis en novembre 1985. Le sommet de Reykjavik a eu lieu l'année suivante en octobre. À la fin de 1987, les deux pays ont signé un traité sur l'élimination des missiles à courte portée et à portée intermédiaire.

Il est possible qu'au cours des années 1990, les deux superpuissances, ne se contentant plus de la détente, cherchent à parvenir à l'entente. La coopération serait certainement profitable aux deux blocs. Les États communistes veulent moderniser leur économie et ils pourraient bénéficier des méthodes de production et des techniques de gestion employées par l'Occident. Les deux camps pourraient aussi collaborer pour régler des problèmes ayant trait au développement du tiers-monde et à la préservation de l'environnement mondial.

Pendant toute la période de l'après-guerre, le Canada a joué un rôle dans les relations Est-Ouest. C'est en effet le deuxième pays du monde en importance pour ce qui est de la superficie, et il se partage le continent nord-américain avec une des superpuissances. Par ailleurs, il est le voisin de l'autre superpuissance, via le Pôle Nord. En général, le Canada a toujours adopté une perspective internationaliste face aux problèmes mondiaux. Il peut donc contribuer à accroître la coopération entre l'Est et l'Ouest.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

The Cold War and Détente 3

Decline or Détente 8

Invasion of Afghanistan 14

The United States Under Reagan 18

Transition in the Soviet Union 25

The USSR Under Gorbachev 29

The US-Soviet Relations in the Mid-1980s 35

The Turning Point? 39

Into the 1990s 44

Ideological Competition 47

The Arms Race and Arms Control 51

Unity in the Western Alliance 56

The Rise of Western Europe 61

Evolution in Eastern Europe 66

The Pacific Rim 71

The Third World 77

North-South Divide 83

From Détente to Entente? 87

Canada's Role in the Contemporary World 92

Further Reading 102

Introduction

> "The West must at all costs keep up its guard and strengthen its unity by better political and economic cooperation. At the same time, it must search constantly for some basis for mutual concessions that would reduce fear and tension and call off the arms race, because internal difficulties in the Soviet Union may some day dispose the Soviet leaders to bargain."
>
> J.A. Corry, Soviet Russia and the Western Alliance, Toronto, 1958.

Current international events are always a mixture of the old and the new. The developments in the 1980s are no exception. To a large extent they have been determined by decisions made in the 1970s and even before. Yet, they have also been affected by the manifold occurrences unique to the 1980s, which have required new choices. And these, in turn, will influence future events, and -- as the present decade comes to a close -- will carry us into the 21st century.

The 1980s have been a continuation of the system which emerged after World War II. The central feature has been the rivalry between the two powerful blocs led by the United States and the Soviet Union respectively. The two sides have adhered to opposed -- and in many respects mutually exclusive -- ideological visions of the world. The awesome nuclear arsenals of the two superpowers, moreover, have threatened a war unprecedented in its destruction, perhaps capable of extinguishing all life on earth. The global reach of the US and the USSR has made them each seek influence in various distant regions, drawing them into local conflicts and making those conflicts more dangerous.

In the present decade the bipolar system -- after a time when it appeared to be diluted -- has re-asserted itself. Expectations of its replacement by a multipolar system -- frequently voiced in the late 1960s and the early 1970s -- have not materialized. Western Europe and, even more, Japan, have made remarkable economic progress, but militarily, although Britain and France have some nuclear weapons of their own, they are no match for either superpower. China, even after embarking upon economic modernization, has not fared much better. It also has some nuclear weapons, but remains just a regional power.

In the last two decades it was predicted that, with the rise of the Third World, the East-West rivalry would be superseded in importance by the North-South confrontation. These predictions have not come true. The non-aligned movement has continued to be weak and largely incoherent. Some of the developing countries, particularly in the Pacific Rim, have made significant strides, but as a whole the economic disparity between the rich North and the poorer South has not been eradicated. After its meteoric rise in the mid-1970s, the prices of crude oil declined and the political clout of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries has all but disappeared.

There have been, of course, several important events in the 1980s which have taken place essentially outside the bipolar framework. The Iraqi-Iranian war, raging since 1980, the Falklands war between Argentina and Britain in 1982, the growing turmoil in South Africa in the mid-1980s -- all fall into this category. Yet most of the major international developments have either stemmed from, or have been drawn into, the global rivalry between the two opposing blocs.

This does not mean that the East-West conflict, re-asserting itself on the international scene, has been a simple continuation from the past. On the contrary, in sharp contrast with most of the 1970s, at the outset of the 1980s relations between the two opposing blocs markedly deteriorated. The major contributing developments were three: the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the closing days of 1979; the ascendancy in the United States early in 1981 of the ideologically more assertive administration headed by Ronald Reagan; and, finally, the evident stagnation in the Soviet Union under the aging leadership of Leonid Brezhnev, continued after his death in November of 1982 by his two ailing successors.

Since that time important new changes have taken place in the international sphere. Above all, in its second term since 1984, the Reagan administration has taken a somewhat more moderate position in East-West relations. With the rise to power in March 1985 of a young and vigorous leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet Union has likewise adopted a conciliatory course in East-West relations. Early in 1988 there are reasons to hope that this trend may continue.

East-West relations in the 1980s, thus, have continued the long-term fluctating pattern which has characterized them since the late 1940s. Their present state, as well as the prospects of their future directions, should be examined in this light.

The Cold War and Détente

In the post-war period the old, traditional pattern of international politics has been largely invalidated. The bipolarity has been pushing the two superpowers into an adversarial relationship. In such circumstances achieving understanding and cooperation between the superpowers -- what the French call entente -- is extremely difficult. The very logic of bipolarity works against it. Instead of several powers, as in a multipolar system, there is now only one power to prevent the other from achieving global hegemony and realizing its own vision of international order. Their respective visions, moreover, have been basically incompatible. While the West has advocated capitalism and pluralistic democracy, the East has stood for socialism and one-party rule. The impassable ideological divide has aggravated their international competition.

Yet, in a nuclear age, war -- traditionally regarded as just an extension of diplomacy -- has also ceased to be a rational means for fostering one's own international objectives. As their nuclear arsenals have been steadily expanded, an all-out conflict between the two superpowers would with increasing inevitability lead to their mutual destruction. Unable to wage war, and yet also unable to come to terms, the United States and the Soviet Union, thus, have turned to other means.

This way the parameters of the actions available to both sides have been considerably narrowed. Each superpower can increase international tensions -- in what has been called Cold War -- while avoiding a direct military conflict (a hot war). Or it may follow the policy of defusing international tensions which was labelled détente, while stopping short of full cooperation (entente). In the conditions of a nuclear stalemate, unless the two superpowers were to act contrary to their own basic security interests, they have no other options. In graphic fashion the difference between the pre-war and the post-war system could be presented like this:

THE PRE-WAR SYSTEM

Cooperation _______________________________ War

THE POST-WAR SYSTEM

Détente ___________________________ the Cold War

In the entire post-war period -- from the second half of the 1940s until today -- the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union has oscillated between Cold War and détente. In 1948-49 there was a serious crisis between the two sides when the Soviets blockaded the western access to Berlin. After 1950, although the USSR did not participate directly, war was under way in Korea. The climax of the Cold War came in the early 1950s -- perhaps during those few weeks in 1953 when a ruthless Communist dictator, Joseph Stalin, still ruled in the USSR and a staunch opponent of Communism, John Foster Dulles, was already in charge of the US foreign policy. Diplomatic contacts were reduced to a minimum and often amounted to nothing more than mutual recriminations. The arms race -- including newly invented nuclear weapons -- was accelerating. There was widespread apprehension that the East-West confrontation might at any time erupt into World War III.

After the death of Stalin, however, East-West tensions gradually relaxed. An armistice was concluded in Korea. In Europe the peace treaty with Austria was signed, providing for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from that country. Negotiations were also undertaken, although to no avail, to resolve the problem of a divided Germany. Diplomatic relations were considerably expanded and there was a summit meeting of the four great powers -- the US, Britain, France and the USSR-- in the summer of 1955 in Geneva. Strictly speaking, then, the begining of East-West détente can be traced to that period.

The next fifteen years, however, were punctuated by new eruptions into Cold War. In 1956, with the Suez crisis and the Soviet invasion of Hungary, relations between the two blocs took a turn for the worse. In 1958 and again in 1961 there were new confrontations over Berlin. In 1962 perhaps the most serious juncture of all came with the Cuban missile crisis. In the second half of the 1960s American involvement in the Vietnam war was intensified, and in 1968 the Russians invaded Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile, in Europe the German problem remained intractable. With the progress of decolonization, some of the developing countries, notably the Congo in 1961, were also swept into the East-West rivalry.

There were, however, some signs of progress. In 1959 Nikita Khrushchev visited the United States and in 1961 he held talks with President John Kennedy in Vienna. In 1963 the 'Hot Line' between the Kremlin and the White House was established and, with the signing of the Partial Test Ban Treaty, the first step was taken towards control of the nuclear arms race. It was followed in 1968 by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Meanwhile, East-West economic and even cultural relations were gradually expanded. These attempts to break away from the Cold War proceeded unevenly, but at each stage led to some lasting accomplishments.

In the late 1960s, new diplomatic initiatives came simultaneously from several quarters. In January 1969 a new American administration, headed by President Richard Nixon, decided to go ahead with the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT I). In March the Communist countries proposed a conference on security in Europe. In the autumn of that year, West Germany's new Social Democratic government adopted a policy of reconciliation with the Communist bloc. Negotiations then proceeded swiftly. Major progress was made over the hitherto intractable German problem. The 1971 four-power agreement assured the West safe access to Berlin. Treaties between the Federal Republic of Germany and the USSR as well as several Eastern European states led to marked improvements in their relations. Finally a treaty between the two German states, in exchange for the formal recognition of the German Democratic Republic by the West, paved the way for freer contacts between the people of the two Germanies.

During Nixon's visit to Moscow in 1972 the next important step in arms control was taken. The SALT I agreement restricting the number of long-range offensive weapons to a more or less equal level on both sides, and the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty banning an area defence against nuclear missiles, were both signed. On the same occasion a Soviet-American agreement on basic principles was issued, solemnly proclaiming détente between the two countries, and stressing that their ideological differences must not lead to a nuclear conflict. Before the year was out a trade pact between them was also concluded In 1973 Brezhnev visited the United States and the following year Nixon again went to the USSR. Later in 1974 President Gerald Ford met with Brezhnev in Vladivostok. In July 1975 Soviet and American spaceships, in a symbolic gesture, linked up in space.

In July 1973 the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) was launched with all the European states (except Albania) as well as the United States and Canada in attendance. Negotiations there went on for two years and in August 1975, at the summit meeting in Helsinki, the Final Act was signed. It pledged to preserve peace and to expand cooperation among all the participants and it strongly underlined their obligation to respect human rights. To advance these objectives a follow-up meeting in Belgrade in 1977 was agreed upon. Meanwhile, the Mutual Balanced Force

Reductions (MBFR) talks aimed at reducing the military confrontation in Central Europe got under way in Vienna. The tensions in Europe -- traditionally the major theatre of East-West confrontation -- were reduced substantially.

Decline or Détente

There were early signs, however, that détente was losing momentum. Before the end of the Nixon administration détente suffered its first setbacks. Soviet support of Egypt in the war against Israel in 1973 was seen by many Americans as a violation of the Basic Principles Agreement of the previous year. Meanwhile, the US Congress attempted to link the expansion of economic relations between the two countries to the increased emigration of Jews from the USSR. Moscow took the position that this amounted to interference in Soviet domestic affairs and, early in 1975, repudiated the trade pact with Washington. At the same time Jewish emigration was restricted.

During the short-lived Ford presidency the downward trend in American-Soviet relations continued. The SALT II treaty, which by the time of the summit meeting in Vladivostok had appeared to be virtually settled, proved to be elusive. At the same time, the MBFR negotiations had also become stalemated. In 1975 the Communists overran South Vietnam. In the same year Cuban troops, armed and transported by the USSR, came to the assistance of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola and, in 1976, they were used to support the radical regime of Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam in Ethiopia. The Americans, with memories of the war in Vietnam still fresh, decided against armed opposition to the Communist moves in Africa. But the disillusionment with détente in the United States was evidently spreading and President Ford found himself under heavy attack.

The problems encountered by détente were perhaps not that surprising. After a quarter century of intense rivalry, the two superpowers' mutually antagonistic stereotypes had become firmly entrenched and deep suspicions persisted on both sides. The Soviets were anxious to be accepted as Americans' equals. At the same time many Americans were nostalgic for the days immediately after World War II when the United States commanded unparallelled influence in the international sphere and insisted that their country continue to be recognized as "Number One." For a while Nixon, with his impeccable anti-Communist credentials, managed to ward off his critics and convey the impression that he was driving a hard bargain with the USSR. When the Watergate affair broke, however, he tried to compensate by exaggerating his foreign policy accomplishments, speaking optimistically of détente as "the new structure of peace." This attempt only contributed to the American public's disillusionment with détente.

At the same time Brezhnev had to look over his shoulder at the party ideologues who were still imbued with a strong sense of mission to spread Communism throughout the world. In 1976 Brezhnev argued that détente might create more favourable conditions for revolutionary activities in the developing countries.[2] An official doctrine was even adopted in Moscow embodying this concept, emphasizing that the "constellation of forces" in the world -- which included not only the military balance, but also the social and political trends -- was now shifting, under détente, away from the United States towards the Soviet Union. Needless to say this interpretation of détente was not received kindly by the Americans. There was growing concern in the US about the Soviet advances in the Third World. Thus, after Nixon's overselling of détente, during Ford's presidency the very term was banned from official Washington's vocabulary.

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[2] Leonid I. Brezhnev, Following Lenin's Path, Moscow, 1976, passim.

With the advent of Jimmy Carter's administration in 1977, American-Soviet relations continued to deteriorate. The USSR continued along a course which increased apprehension in the United States. The Soviets did not match American reductions in their military after the end of the war in Vietnam, but steadily continued the buildup of their forces. While staying within the limits of SALT I they developed more accurate and more powerful intercontinental missiles, the SS-18 and SS-19, armed with multiple warheads. In Europe they introduced a new medium-range missile, the SS-20. Their conventional forces were considerably modernized. The expansion of their navy and air force greatly enhanced the Soviet capability to project its power into distant parts of the world.

The Soviet involvement in the developing countries, in fact, not only continued, but expanded. The Cuban forces remained in Angola and in Ethiopia, where they helped to drive the Somalis out of the Ogaden. The USSR maintained close ties with Iraq, Syria and Libya, supplying them with arms. In April 1978 the People's Democratic party led by Nur Mohammed Taraki staged a coup in Afghanistan. Soviet advisors appeared in Kabul and in December a Soviet-Afghan alliance was concluded. In January 1979 the Vietnamese staged a full-scale offensive against Kampuchea. They threw out the Pol Pot regime, which was fanatically Communist but independent of Moscow, and replaced it with a government subordinate to Hanoi.

At the same time, contrary to the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act, repression against the human rights activists in the USSR persisted. Soon after he came to office Carter took a strong stand against this human rights abuse and sent a letter of support to Andrei Sakharov, a prominent nuclear physicist and a leading Soviet dissident. The Soviets, in turn, accused Carter of interfering in their domestic affairs and of trying to revive the Cold War climate. At the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) review conference in Belgrade in 1977-78, the Americans and the Soviets clashed sharply over the human rights issue, although by then the United States position had been somewhat toned down. Indeed, the only accomplishment of the Belgrade conference was an agreement to hold another CSCE review meeting in Madrid in 1980. After Belgrade several more leading civil right activists were arrested and tried in the Soviet Union. One of them, Anatoly Scharansky, was accused of working for American intelligence and sentenced to long-term imprisonment.

Within the CSCE process an increasingly important role was assigned to the so-called Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) aimed at enhancing the security of the European nations by reducing the danger of a surprise attack. Some of the CBMs had already been included in the Helsinki Final Act, but in Belgrade new proposals were advanced. No agreement on them was reached. At the Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) talks in Vienna, aimed at reducing conventional forces, there was no substantial progress. The SALT II negotiations dragged on. Instead of trying to finalize the Vladivostok agreement, President Carter put forward new and far more extensive proposals which the Soviets rejected outright. The two sides then returned to the original version, but concluding the treaty was further delayed.

As a result, frustration over the state of relations with the Soviet Union was on the rise in the United States. Attacks against the Carter administration over this issue mounted. Carter's critics insisted that different components of détente should be linked together. They advocated that, as a reprisal for continued violations of human rights, economic and cultural contacts with the USSR should be cut back. These same critics proposed, in view of the repeated Soviet interventions in the Third World, that the SALT II negotiations ought to be suspended. In fact, after the trial of Scharansky, the Carter administration did withhold the sale of some advanced technology to the USSR, but it steadfastly refused to tamper with the SALT II treaty, asserting that it was as indispensable to the United States as to the Soviet Union.

Some of the American opponents of détente went even further and maintained that the arms control process should be abandoned altogether. They argued that it had already given the Soviet Union a substantial edge over the United States and, if permitted to continue into the 1980s, might lead to a situation in which the USSR would be able to deal a pre-emptive strike against American land-based nuclear missiles. Even if this Soviet advantage did not lead to war, it could place the United States at a serious diplomatic disadvantage in some future crisis.

The beleaguered Carter administration responded by trying to redress the military balance between the United States and the Soviet Union. The cruise missile and Trident submarine programmes were accelerated. In an attempt to eliminate the danger of a Soviet pre-emptive strike against American land-based missiles, a mobile intercontinental ballistic missile system (MX) was initiated. In 1978 the United States and its allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) decided to increase their military budgets. And the next year, to match the Soviet SS-20, NATO announced its intention to deploy Pershing II and cruise missiles in Western Europe. This decision, however, was coupled with a proposal to the

Soviet Union to undertake negotiations to reduce the number of these medium-range missiles on both sides. These new arms control talks were to supplement SALT III on the one hand and the MBFR and the CSCE on the other hand, thus providing for a comprehensive movement towards East-West arms control.

On 18 June 1979 the long-delayed summit meeting between Presidents Brezhnev and Carter took place in Vienna. On that occasion the SALT II Treaty was signed. It was a carefully negotiated agreement which went beyond SALT I in several respects. Among the novel features were ceilings imposed not only on the number of missiles and bombers but also on the overall number of nuclear warheads; the limits were both quantitative and qualitative, and, what was particularly significant, there were restrictions on the development of new weapons. The accord provided for elaborate verification measures. As such, the treaty seemed to be well geared to its main purpose -- controlling the nuclear arms race between the two superpowers. Upon ratification it was to be immediately followed by SALT III talks, which would aim at actual arms reductions.

Nevertheless, in an atmosphere of a growing distrust of the Soviet Union, SALT II came under strong attack in the United States. It was criticized for not sufficiently reducing the Soviet arsenal of long-range missiles and for not providing for even stronger verification measures. The issue was taken up by various presidential hopefuls, notably the leading Republican candidate, Ronald Reagan. The Carter administration responded with a carefully prepared defence of SALT II during hearings held by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in the fall of 1979. All doubts over the terms of the treaty were dealt with by administration spokesmen and it was to be submitted for debate on the Senate floor with a view to ratification early in 1980. The stage, it appeared, was set for a new advance in East-West détente. Then, on 27 December 1979 the Soviets invaded Afghanistan.

Invasion of Afghanistan

The Soviets had valid reasons for concern about the internal developments in Afganistan. The Communist government there could not cope on its own with a growing Muslim insurgency. Moreover, a vicious power struggle was evidently under way in Kabul. In September 1979 President Taraki was murdered in mysterious circumstances and succeeded by Hafizullah Amin who represented a wing of the party which by its radical measures aggravated the conflict in the country.[3] He apparently did not enjoy Moscow's confidence, for immediately after the Soviet intervention he was executed and replaced by a new leader, Babrak Karmal. If the Soviet Union was drawn into intervening in Afghanistan by the domestic dynamics there, it nevertheless committed a grave error by doing so. It let itself be bogged down in what turned out to be a prolonged and costly military conflict and it paid a heavy international price.

Moscow's miscalculation may have been inadvertently encouraged by Washington's vacillating policy in the Third World. The Americans grumbled, but they did not try to check the spread of Soviet influence in several countries in Africa and Asia. They also showed little concern over the initial Communist coup in Afghanistan or over the conclusion of the Soviet-Afghan alliance. Furthermore, the collapse in January 1979 of Shah Reza Pahlavi's regime in Iran, which had been closely allied to the United States, and its replacement by the fundamentalist Islamic government headed by Ayatollah

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[3] Thomas T. Hammond, Red Flag over Afghanistan: The Communist Coup, the Soviet Invasion and the Consequences, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1984, pp. 80-82.

Ruhollah Khomeini, greatly weakened Washington's influence in the region. Moscow, thus, had reason to believe that it might get away with military intervention in Afghanistan.

The Soviet leaders, however, misjudged the changing political mood in the United States. The Americans were watching the spread of Soviet influence in the Third World with growing impatience. Memories of the war in Vietnam had held them back from intervening with arms, but these qualms were fading. The revolution in Iran and the holding of their diplomats as hostages in Teheran -- although the USSR had nothing to do with either -- only added to American frustrations. In such circumstances the Soviet military move into Afghanistan, right across the border from Iran, became the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. The United States' riposte was instantaneous and sharp.

The Americans and their allies led in the condemnation of the Soviet move by the United Nations General Assembly, where they were joined by an overwhelming majority of the Third World countries. The Carter Administration drastically curtailed economic relations with the USSR and declared a boycott of the Olympic Games in Moscow. Most importantly it withdrew the SALT II treaty from consideration by the Senate, in effect suspending the arms control negotiations. Then President Carter sternly warned the Soviet Union that any encroachments in the Persian Gulf would be resisted by the United States with arms. He called the new international situation the worst crisis since World War II.[4]

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[4] The New York Times, 1 January 1980.

The Soviets, evidently taken aback by such a formidable international reaction, responded in an angry and incoherent fashion which only aggravated their initial error. They tried to turn the tables against the West by claiming that their intervention was necessary because the United States and China had instigated the Muslim rebellion against the Afghan government. In a defiant, but empty gesture they exiled Andrei Sakharov -- who dared to take a public stand against the intervention in Afghanistan -- from Moscow to Gorky where he was virtually placed under house arrest.

The strong American response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was in many respects appropriate. There is no question that the USSR's action represented a flagrant violation of the United Nation's principles and that, since it was the first instance which the Soviet Union had employed its own forces against a Third World country, it set a very dangerous precedent. Yet, there is also little doubt that the United States' reaction was aggravated by the American political climate. Not only did the invasion of Afghanistan coincide with the acute strain over the holding of American hostages in Teheran, but it was also caught up in the politics of the approaching presidential election. Faced with growing criticism for vacillating and conciliatory policies towards the Soviet Union, Carter seized the opportunity to prove himself to be a decisive and strong leader. Thus he hoped to improve his chances in the elections, which by then were less than a year ahead.

In such circumstances the United States' reaction was naturally overstated. There was no doubt that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a serious blow to East-West détente. The setback to the progress of arms control was its most serious consequence. In this respect the situation resembled the dark days of August 1968, when, in retaliation for the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, President Lyndon Johnson cancelled his visit to Moscow and postponed the start of the SALT I negotiations. Yet, it was clearly an exaggeration to characterize the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan -- as Carter did -- as the worst East-West crisis since the end of World War II. It certainly was no more dangerous than the confrontations over Berlin, the Korean War, or the Cuban missile crisis.

No wonder then that several key allies of the United States disagreed with this interpretation. They did not think that the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan marked a step towards domination of the Persian Gulf. While in no way approving of expansion of the USSR's influence in central Asia, both France and West Germany demonstrated that they were primarily concerned about salvaging détente in Europe. At the meeting in Paris in February 1980, therefore, the French president and the West German chancellor confined their strictures on the USSR to a warning that East-West détente could not withstand another shock on the same scale. Most of the Western European countries followed the Franco-German lead and abstained from adding any significant sanctions against the Soviet Union to those imposed by the United States.

The Western Europeans had valid reasons for adopting a more moderate stance than the Americans. For they had benefitted more than their allies across the Atlantic from détente and tried to salvage at least some of its achievements. In the 1970s they had substantially expanded their trade with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The West Germans, moreover, had their own reasons for continuing détente. It had helped them to reduce the barriers dividing their country: eight million West Germans travelled to the German Democratic Republic in 1978, while two million East

Germans visited the Federal Republic of Germany in the same year. On the eve of the follow-up meeting in Madrid, the Western Europeans were anxious to preserve the continuation of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe process.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the strong United States' reaction to it represented a decisive setback to East-West détente. Yet, they did not completely stop it. For the remainder of Carter's term American-Soviet relations simply stagnated. All participants awaited the outcome of the next presidential elections in the United States. Carter became primarily preoccupied with freeing the American hostages in Teheran. The hostages did return home, on the very day Ronald Reagan was inaugurated as President of the United States.

The United States Under Reagan

In the early stages of the Reagan administration American-Soviet relations went from bad to worse. Responding to the more assertive mood in the country, Washington adopted a distinctly tougher stance towards Moscow. The Soviets were accused of continuing their defence buildup and of striving for nuclear superiority over the United States, seeking greater influence through repeated interventions in the Third World, and ignoring the Helsinki Final Act by violating human rights at home. Reagan and his top assistants indulged in strong, and at times abusive language. Shortly after his inauguration the president accused the Soviet leaders of striving to conquer the world and, in pursuit of this, being ready "to commit any crime, to lie, and to cheat."[5]

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[5] Oye, Kenneth A., Robert J. Lieber, and Donald Rothchild (eds.), Eagle Resurgent? The Reagan Era in American Foreign Policy, Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1987, p. 193.

The Reagan administration, however, did not completely close the door to negotiations with Moscow. Contacts were maintained, even at the foreign ministers level, but these were mainly used by the Americans to file a litany of objections against the Soviet's international behaviour. Reagan showed no interest in meeting Brezhnev, and when the Soviet leader died in November 1982, the American president did not attend his funeral. Before engaging the Soviets in substantial talks, Reagan wanted to strengthen the United States' position. He focused upon building up America's economic and military power.

After years of stagnation in the late 1970s and the early 1980s the performance of the American economy improved. How far this was due to "Reaganomics" -- the deliberate efforts on the part of the government to reduce inflation and to stimulate economic growth -- remains debatable, but it certainly enhanced the United States' prestige in the world. At the same time the Reagan administration undertook a major effort to revive American military strength. In 1981-85 the outlays on armaments were increased by 7 percent a year, amounting to over a trillion dollars. The plans to deploy 100 MX missiles and to develop a new missile, the Midgetman, were advanced. Other programmes begun by Carter were pushed forward. The Trident submarine equipped with more accurate and more devastating missiles, the B-1 and stealth bombers as well as the ground-, air- and sea-launched cruise missiles were developed.

The armament efforts were accompanied by evolution in the American strategic doctrine. Some officials in the Reagan administration argued that the concept of nuclear deterrence -- based upon assured mutual destruction in the event of a conflict -- was becoming obsolete. They claimed that with more advanced military technology and the right targeting strategy a nuclear war could actually be fought and won -- implying that perhaps the United States could obtain military superiority over the Soviet Union. Furthermore, in an address to the nation on 23 March 1983, President Reagan appealed to the American scientists to try to devise a defensive system which would render the United States invulnerable to Soviet nuclear attack. He envisaged a leak-proof "astrodome" that would protect both the American military and civilian targets by destroying the attacking Soviet missiles in flight. To that end new defensive weapons would have to be developed and placed in space -- hence the defence initiative was dubbed "Star Wars."

The plan was strongly criticized as unworkable and too costly by many American and other western experts. They pointed out, moreover, that adding defensive to offensive weapons would accelerate the arms race, and that a space-based defence was incompatible with the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972. Nevertheless in 1984 the American president issued a directive launching the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). A special office was created in the Defense Department to study the feasibility of the project with an initial allocation of $26 billion for a five year period.

While forging ahead with armaments, the United States did not completely abandon arms control efforts. The Reagan administration upheld the NATO decision of 1979 to try to reduce the number of medium-range missiles in Europe. To achieve this American-Soviet talks started in Geneva in November 1981. The Americans proposed a "zero option," i.e., the US would refrain from deploying their missiles in exchange for the Soviets' dismantling their SS-20s. The Soviets rejected this plan and insisted that the French and the British missiles should be included in any bargain. In mid-1982 it appeared that an agreement at least placing a ceiling on the number of medium-range missiles might be at hand, but then these hopes were dashed. On 14 November 1983 the first American Tomahawk missiles arrived in Britain and on 22 November Pershing II missiles were placed in West Germany. The next day the Soviets walked out of the talks in Geneva.

As to the long-range missiles, although the Reagan administration did not resubmit the SALT II Treaty for ratification by the Senate -- it nevertheless agreed, as long as the Soviets would do the same, to informally abide by its terms. In June 1982 American-Soviet negotiations to arrive at a new accord started in Geneva. To emphasize that they went beyond the SALT process and were aimed not only at arms limitiations but at actual reductions, they were called the Strategic Arms Reductions Talks (START). Yet, they led nowhere. The Americans insisted upon substantial cuts in the land-based long-range missiles that are the mainstay of the Soviet nuclear arsenal. The talks became bogged down and on 23 December 1983 the Soviet negotiators -- claiming that the installation of the American medium-range missiles in Europe had created a new situation -- left the talks without indicating a date for their resumption.

The new American administration also declared its intention to oppose more vigorously the spread of Soviet influence in the Third World. It offered military assistance to insurgents opposing the pro-Moscow regimes in various countries. This became known as the Reagan Doctrine. In Afghanistan the Americans supported the Mujahideen fighters, who held their own and inflicted heavy losses among the Soviet occupying forces. In Kampuchea the US helped the Khmer Rouge and other guerillas opposing with arms the government in Phnom Penh which had been imposed by the Vietnamese invaders. In southern Africa the United States linked progress towards granting independence to Namibia to the withdrawal of the Cuban contingent from Angola; and they also supported the insurgency against the regime in Luanda conducted by the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola.

Special American attention was given to the Caribbean Basin and Central America. In October 1983 the United States intervened in Grenada, overthrowing there the leftist, pro-Cuban regime. In El Salvador the Americans supported the rightist government -- at the same time trying to steer it in the direction of greater moderation -- against radical insurgents. In Nicaragua, ruled since 1979 by the leftist Sandinistas, the United States adopted the opposite course and supported the counter-revolutionaries (called the Contras). Washington showed little interest in a plan presented by several Latin American countries -- known as the Contadora group -- that called for an end to all foreign intervention in Nicaragua. Instead, the Americans adamantly insisted that the Sandinista regime should break off its ties with Cuba and the USSR and adopt democracy at home. When in 1982 Congress prohibited funding of the Contras, some members of the Reagan administration continued to do so by covert means.

Yet, while supporting the anti-Communist insurgencies in various parts of the world the United States under Reagan was careful (except in the case of tiny Grenada) not to get involved in direct military interventions. Apparently the lessons of Vietnam were still remembered in Washington. In 1983 a contingent of American marines was used in an effort to maintain order in Lebanon. They were there as a part of a broader multinational force, and -- after suffering 260 dead in a terrorist bombing -- they were soon withdrawn.

The Reagan administration did not only reinforce the opposition against the spread of Communism in the world, but occasionally even conveyed the impression that it intended to carry the struggle into the Communist lands themselves. At the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe follow-up meeting in Madrid in 1981-83, the American representatives strongly denounced the human rights abuses in the USSR and the various Eastern Europe states. The United States' propaganda directed at the Communist bloc was intensified and its tone was sharpened. In a speech to the British parliament on 8 June 1982, President Reagan stated his hope that "the march of freedom and democracy will leave Marxism-Leninism on the ash heap of history."[6]

The Americans were encouraged to adopt such a view by the serious crisis which developed in the early 1980s in Poland. The economic situation there deteriorated so much that in August 1980 workers' strikes spread throughout the country, culminating in the rise of the free trade union called Solidarity. The Communist government was thrown into retreat and accepted the new trade union's existence. Soon Solidarity was transformed into a 9 million-strong national movement demanding the restoration of democracy and the re-assertion of Poland's independence from the USSR. There were fears that -- as in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 -- the Soviet Union would intervene militarily to suppress the ferment in Poland. First the Carter, and then the Reagan administration, sternly warned Moscow against interference in Polish internal affairs.

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[6] The New York Times, 9 June 1982.

In December 1981, however, the upheaval was brought to an end by the Polish military, led by General Wojciech Jaruzelski. Martial law was introduced, Solidarity was disbanded and most of its leaders were interned. Gradually the authority of the Communist government was restored and calm prevailed. Political prisoners were released and by mid-1983 martial law was lifted, though Solidarity remained banned. Washington reacted strongly to these Polish developments, but its influence over them was slight. A direct American intervention, of course, was out of the question; and even the use of punitive economic measures was restricted. Declaring Poland bankrupt and compelling it to default on its hard currency debt -- which at the time stood at US $28 billion -- would have been of no help to the Polish people and at the same time would have thrown the western banks into disarray.

So the United States turned to economic sanctions, which it applied against both Poland and the Soviet Union -- which it held responsible for encouraging Jaruzelski in suppressing Solidarity. Yet, here once again Washington ran into problems. Its Western European allies, who were relieved that at least the Polish crisis was resolved without the use of Soviet intervention, refused to go along and limited their own sanctions to largely symbolic steps. Above all, they refused to interrupt, as the Americans insisted, the construction of a pipeline for delivery of Soviet natural gas to Western Europe. In the summer of 1982 the United States responded by prohibiting the subsidiaries of American companies from supplying parts to the project. The Western European governments, however, pointing to the continued American grain sales to the Soviet Union, stayed adamant. Faced with the prospect of a major crisis in NATO, in the fall Washington relented. In exchange for a promise by the Western Europeans of tougher restrictions on trade with the Communist countries, the American objections to the construction of the pipeline were abandoned. As the crisis in Poland abated, and especially as the political prisoners were released, gradually the United States' sanctions were withdrawn.

Transition in the Soviet Union

Reagan's characterization of the crisis of Communism was exaggerated, but there was no doubt that in the early 1980s the Soviet Union was passing through a difficult period. The country's leaders were getting on in years -- in 1981 Leonid Brezhnev turned 75 and he was visibly ailing. Most of his senior colleagues on the Politburo were septuagenarians as well. Yet, they desperately clung to their power and privileges -- at the party congress in 1981 all being re-affirmed in office. There were rumours of gross corruption among the ruling elite, including some of Brezhev's close friends and even his family. There was evident inertia at the top -- an inability to cope with the country's mounting problems.

In the 1970s performance of the Soviet economy markedly declined. Economic growth went down from over 5 percent in the 1960s to 2 percent in the early 1980s. The overcentralized industrial system was increasingly inefficient -- unable to fulfill its plans. A declining supply of labour no longer made extensive economic development possible and required a shift to a technology-intensive strategy. But with no changes forthcoming the technological gap between the USSR, and the advanced western countries and Japan, was widening. Despite substantial investments, agriculture also continued to perform poorly, requiring substantial imports of grain. The rate of improvement in the standard of living of the population, thus, slowed down. The quality of consumer goods was low and there were recurrent food shortages. Social ills, such as sluggish work, absenteeism caused by alcohol abuse, bribery and theft were widespread. There was an urgent need for economic and social reforms.

The costs of the armaments race, aggravated by the new challenge from the Reagan administration, also placed a heavy burden on the Soviet economy. The protracted conflict in Afghanistan and the subsidies to the Communist client-states in the Third World, notably Cuba and Vietnam, were costly too. The acute crisis in Poland created still more problems for Moscow.

In the broader international sphere the Soviet Union also was not doing well. Its relations with China were strained. They were further aggravated by the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea. Relations with Japan remained poisoned by a dispute over the Kurile islands, which the Soviets had annexed at the end of World War II and which the Japanese insisted should be returned to them. In the wake of the Polish crisis Soviet relations with the major Western European powers deteriorated. They were also affected by the emergence in several Western European capitals of governments more reserved towards Moscow. In 1979 the Conservatives under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher took over in Britain; in 1981 the socialists (who nevertheless were somewhat warmer toward the US than the Gaullists had been) led by Francois Mitterand won in France; and in 1982 the Christian Democrats under Helmut Kohl came to power in the Federal Republic of Germany. In the context of East-West rivalry, all of these new Western European governments were closer than their predecessors to the Reagan administration.

In January 1982 the veteran second secretary of the Soviet Communisty party, Mikhail Suslov, died, and in the spring Brezhnev's health visibly deteriorated. Yuri Andropov took over from Suslov, and when Brezhnev died in November, succeeded him as the General Secretary. Andropov admitted the sorry shape of the Soviet economy and attempted to improve it by stressing labour discipline and curbing alcoholism. He also hinted at the need for a more comprehensive overhaul of the entire economic system, but he had no time to undertake one. His health was also poor -- by the fall of the 1983 it took a major turn for the worse and on 9 February 1984 he died.

Andropov was succeeded by Konstantin Chernenko. As a former lieutenant of Brezhnev, Chernenko played down the criticism of his boss' policies and abstained from instituting any major reforms. Yet, from the outset it was obvious that he was just another transitional leader. For he was gravely ill too and on 10 March 1985 he passed away. Finally, a younger man succeeded him: Mikhail Gorbachev, who was only 54 when he became the General Secretary. Gorbachev had been groomed for this post by Andropov; in 1984 he had become the second secretary, and in the final months of Chernenko's life he had increasingly emerged as the man in charge.

During the transition period in the Soviet Union East-West relations were poor. They were aggravated by the continued conflict in Afghanistan and the crisis in Poland, but they were also adversely affected by the worsening bilateral American-Soviet political climate -- on the one hand the more assertive mood in Washington, and on the other hand the tendency towards procrastination, and even inertia, in Moscow. Evidently, the "constellation of forces" in the international sphere no longer worked in favour of, but rather against the Soviet Union.

The low point in East-West relations came in 1983. A series of events in that year contributed to the decline. Early in March in a speech to the National Association of Evangelists, Reagan characterzied the USSR as "the focus of evil in the modern world" and later in the same month he launched his Star Wars plan. At the end of August the Soviets shot down a South Korean passenger plane with the loss of 269 lives -- claiming that it deliberately intruded into their territory while on a spying mission for the United States. When this produced a wave of indignation in the West, the USSR stood its ground. In September Andropov accused the American president of "smearing the Soviet people [with] what amounts to obscenities alternating with hypocritical preaching about morals and humanism."[7] The next month the United States invaded Grenada. In December the Soviet delegates walked out of the Geneva arms control talks.

By that time most of the achievements of détente from the 1970s had been wiped out. The negotiations to halt the nuclear arms race between the two superpowers were broken off and a new round of armaments acquisition -- including the new weapons to be placed in space -- was under way. Several conflicts raged in the Third World -- with the Soviet Union and the United States supporting opposing sides. And both sides engaged in bitter recriminations. Indeed, the climate in American-Soviet relations deteriorated to that resembling the second half of the 1960s, when the Americans waged war in Vietnam and the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia. This was a clearcut retrogression, especially from the halcyon days of East-West détente in the early 1970s. Graphically it could be presented like this:

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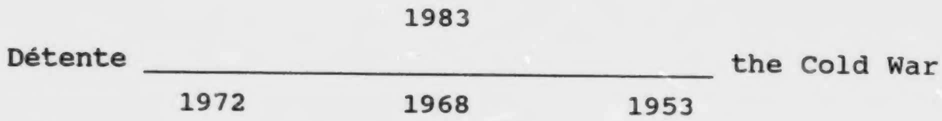
[7] The New York Times, 29 September 1983.



The USSR Under Gorbachev

With the rise to power in March 1985 of Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet Union at last gained a young and robust leader. After the years of stagnation and decline he symbolized the yearnings for change and progress in the country. Gorbachev has lived up to that image. He has presented himself as a dynamic and modern leader. His message to the Soviet people has been precise and candid. He has not concealed the difficulties facing the USSR, but he has offered hope and a sense of purpose in overcoming them.

In consolidating his position Gorbachev has moved with self-assurance and political skill. He was helped by the fact that by 1985 several senior figures on the Politburo had either died or reached an age when they could be easily retired. As to his younger rivals, notably Grigory Romanov, Gorbachev acted swiftly by dismissing them. Of course, he filled the existing vacancies with his own supporters. Once he got hold of the top leadership he systematically proceeded with a similar overhaul of the party officials at lower levels. By the time the Communist party congress met in February 1986, Gorbachev was clearly in command and he was easily re-elected as the General Secretary.

The new Soviet leader has unequivocally stated the urgent need for domestic reforms -- "we simply do not have any other choice," he declared.[8] He has been quite blunt in revealing the country's economic and social ills, which he blames on the obsolete methods of the government under Brezhnev. He has also been critical of Stalin, who first introduced the overcentralized and oppressive Soviet system. Yet, at the same time, Gorbachev has underlined his continued faith in Communism, which he has often described as superior to western capitalism. He has claimed to go to its true, unspoiled roots. Invoking the authority of the founder of the Soviet state, Vladimir Lenin, he has proclaimed his intentions to carry out a revolution within a revolution.[9]

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[8] "Gorbachev's Report--Theses," News Release Communiqué, USSR Embassy, Ottawa, 28 January 1987, p. 5.

In his efforts to correct the situation in the country Gorbachev has proceeded carefully, but systematically. Initially he took up where Andropov left off and just stressed the need for greater economic efficiency; but he did not stop there and gradually unveiled a comprehensive programme of reforms of his own. First, he called for glasnost -- greater openness in the Soviet society. Public criticism of the various shortcomings in Soviet life and the efforts to remedy them were encouraged. There was a marked change in the tone of the public media, which have become more lively and even controversial. A more relaxed atmosphere also emerged in artistic activities -- novels with provocative political themes have appeared in print and similarly critical films and plays have been displayed. Then Gorbachev followed with a campaign for greater democracy. Many dissidents were freed from imprisonment. Anatoly Scharansky was released from the labour camp and permitted to emigrate to Israel; and Andrei Sakharov returned from Gorky to Moscow and resumed his post in the Academy of Sciences. Plans to introduce multiple-candidate elections to posts in both the government and the Communist party were announced. In the spring of 1987 the first such elections were actually held at the local government level.

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[9] Mikhail Gorbachev, Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World, Harper & Row Publishers, New York, 1987, pp. 25-26.

Finally, Gorbachev advanced with his economic reforms. A modest opening for private enterprise confined to the members of a single family was made. In mid-1987 a more ambitious plan to overhaul the entire economic system was presented. Its backbone is the re-introduction of what hitherto had been anathema under Communism, the economic law of supply and demand. Within the framework of the nationalized Soviet economy, prices are to be more closely related to the real costs of production and wages to performance at work. To achieve these goals the role of central ministries is to be reduced and economic decision-making is going to be shifted to individual enterprises. The banking and financial system will be adjusted accordingly. Gorbachev wants to have the new system under way by 1990. Thus, what he has called perestroika -- the restructuring of the entire Soviet society -- has begun in earnest.

Carrying out such fundamental changes in the USSR is a formidable task. Gorbachev does not conceal that he is faced with powerful opposition against his plans. The very task of re-fashioning the massive Soviet bureaucracy alone -- making it abandon the old methods of operating under a centralized system and assume greater responsibility -- is an extremely difficult one. Within the bureaucracy there are also strong vested interest groups reluctant to give up their privileges. Many holdovers from the Brezhnev era, such as the party secretary in the Ukraine, Vladimir Shcherbitskii, are still well entrenched in their positions. The party ideologues are fearful of excessive criticism of the past, which they believe undermines the foundations of Communism in the Soviet Union. The party's second secretary, Yegor Ligachev, sounds less enthusiastic about glasnost than Gorbachev. The police and the military approve of the efforts at greater economic discipline, but are less happy about the democratization of political life -- the abrupt dismissal in the spring of 1987 of the defence minister, Marshal Sergei Sokolov, was symptomatic here. If all these groups coalesce they may effectively block Gorbachev's reforms, or even -- as happened to Khrushchev in 1964 -- remove him from power.

Gorbachev's economic reforms also will not necessarily be supported by all the Soviet people. For the introduction of a free market mechanism carries certain disadvantages for them too. An elimination of subsidies would mean the rise of consumer prices, and possible inflation; while linking wages to performance could lead to unemployment -- producing dissatisfaction among the workers. And, paradoxically, at the same time the progress of democratization could accelerate popular ferment.

Yet, Gorbachev also has various developments in the USSR working in his favour. There is widespread awareness -- especially among the young and the better educated segments of the Soviet society -- of the urgent need to overcome stagnation. Glasnost makes these strivings even more conscious. At the same time the campaign for democratization aims to enlist the Soviet people in the efforts to make progress. Thus, even though he is faced with great obstacles there is no question that Gorbachev has the country on the move. He has already advanced so far that, barring a major error on his part, his opponents cannot reverse the direction of internal change.

Gorbachev had adopted an activist course not only at home but abroad. Even before becoming the General Secretary he displayed considerable diplomatic talents during his visits to Canada in 1983 and Britain in 1984. And after assuming power, from the outset he has made it clear that he plans to be personally in charge of foreign policy. The veteran foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko, was moved to a largely ceremonial post as head of state, and he was replaced with Gorbachev's close associate, Eduard Shevardnadze. Extensive personnel changes, bringing younger people to the top, were carried out in the ministry. In the party secretariat two seasoned diplomats -- the former ambassador to Canada, Alexander Yakovlev, and the former ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Dobrynin -- have emerged as Gorbachev's key advisers.

The new General Secretary's style in foreign relations has been a nimble one -- his public statements often focus on international issues and he has systematically cultivated international contacts. His pronouncements have been candid, although not devoid of sophistication. He has made an obvious effort to comprehend the views of his adversaries and to try to find common ground with them. He has come out with a number of novel, and even startling, international initiatives.

Gorbachev does not conceal that his more accommodating stance in foreign policy is linked to the domestic developments in the USSR. He has admitted that in order to concentrate upon the internal reconstruction of the Soviet society, he needs external calm. But, no doubt, Gorbachev's thinking has also been affected by broader trends in the international sphere. The optimistic assumptions from the 1970s that the "constellation of forces" in the world works in favour of the Soviet Union, have been quietly shelved. Instead, a more realistic assessment of the country's international position has been adopted.

The ideological component of Soviet foreign policy -- prompting Moscow to support leftist revolutionary movements throughout the world -- has been toned down. At the last party congress the customary bold declarations about the forthcoming triumph of Communism were replaced by statements about movement in this direction. On the same occasion Gorbachev characterized the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan as a "bleeding wound" and voiced hope that it could soon be brought to an end.[10] While continuing modest economic and military assistance to Nicaragua, Moscow has kept its distance from the Sandinista regime, signalling that it does not intend to become entangled in a conflict there. And there have been reports about greater thrift in Soviet subsidies to their other client-states in the Third World.

The most important aspect of Soviet foreign policy under Gorbachev, however, has been the "new strategic thinking" about its armament race and arms control with the United States. A number of Soviet theorists have reaffirmed that a nuclear war cannot be won, and, consequently, that no foreign policy goals could be achieved by resorting to nuclear weapons. Thus, despite the Americans' continued deployment of medium-range missiles in Western Europe, the Soviets under Gorbachev, have returned to the bargaining table and have vigorously participated in the arms control talks in Geneva. They have maintained strenuous objections against the development of the defensive weapons, but at the same time they have shown interest in reducing the offensive ones. To accelerate these efforts, soon after Gorbachev's coming to power, plans were advanced for him to meet with President Reagan.

Moscow's more relaxed stance has been evident not only in Soviet-American relations. The USSR has also activated its contacts with other major western powers. High level visits were exchanged with France, Britain, West Germany and Canada. At the conference in Stockholm in 1984-86 -- which was a part of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe process aimed at reducing the fear of a surprise attack in

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[10] Pravda, 26 February 1986.

Europe -- the Soviets adopted a distinctly moderate stand, contributing to the conference's success. In Asia they have cultivated their friendship with India, and have tried to improve relations with China and Japan. They have shown interest in participating in a peace conference on the Middle East (if one is held) and to facilitate this, for the first time since 1968, they have renewed diplomatic contacts with Israel. Significantly, the number of Jews permitted to leave the USSR has gone up.

The Soviet Union has also demonstrated awareness of the interdependence of many global problems. It has recognized the need for closer international economic cooperation and has shown tentative interest in joining the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and even in the new round of talks to liberalize international trade sponsored by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Under Gorbachev, thus, the Soviet Union has been conducting a dynamic, imaginative and multifaceted foreign policy. While it has striven to moderate its rivalry with the West, it has become a more active player in some other aspects of world affairs.

The US-Soviet Relations in the Mid-1980s

Moscow's new foreign policy course is finding a sympathetic ear in Washington. The early militant stance of the Reagan administration in the international sphere has been considerably mitigated. Various reasons contributed to this. First of all, while the American public generally approved of the United States' more vigorous efforts to contain the spread of Communism in the world, at the same time there were limits beyond which it was clearly not prepared to go. There was a widespread awareness -- cultivated by the peace movement -- that a nuclear war between the two superpowers would end in a mutual disaster. After Vietnam the Americans were wary of letting themselves become involved in another military conflict in the Third World. The invasion of Grenada in 1983 and the bombing of Libya in 1986 -- in retaliation for its supporting of terrorist activities -- were widely approved by the American public, but they were low-risk episodes. On the question of a possible direct intervention in Nicaragua, the Americans have been more reserved, and many members of Congress have explicitly warned against it.

A similar position was taken by the United States' allies. Even though the major Western European governments moved closer to sharing the Reagan administration's vision of the world -- as primarily a contest between western democracy and Soviet Communism -- their interpretation has been more moderate. With Europe being the main centre of military confrontation -- and the influential peace movements in Britain and West Germany have strongly accentuated this -- they desperately want to avoid a nuclear conflict and have encouraged the two superpowers to proceed with arms control negotiations. The Western Europeans have also adopted a more detached position towards the conflicts in the Third World, seeing them more as stemming from indigenous roots -- under-development, social injustice and political instability -- and less as a part of the global East-West rivalry. Their view of the turmoil in Central America fits into this category and has made them continue to maintain proper interstate relations with the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua.

There was also an apparent division over the conduct of relations with the Soviet Union within the Reagan administration itself. Its more ideologically oriented members, in the Defense Department and the National Security Council, were opposed by the more pragmatic diplomats in the State Department. Alexander Haig, who was Secretary of State in 1981-82, recognized the need for some accommodation with the Soviet

Union, and his successor, George Shultz, followed this line even more vigorously. Moreover, as the Reaganites were daily faced with the complexities of world problems they tended to become less zealous and more practical. Gradually, the president himself was swayed to adopt a more moderate stand. To justify the change, an argument -- not entirely devoid of truth -- was advanced that as the United States had become stronger militarily it was in a better position to pursue its goals through diplomacy. "America should not negotiate from the position of weakness," Shultz argued in October 1984. "But we reject the view that we should become strong so that we need not negotiate."[11]

Even before the presidential elections in 1984 -- in which Reagan crushed his Democratic opponent Walter Mondale -- there were signs of a more moderate stance on the part of the president. In sharp contrast to his previous derogatory statements about the Soviet Union, in a speech on 16 January 1984 Reagan acknowledged the existence of "common interests" between the two countries and the need for their "constructive relationship."[12] In September the Soviet foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko, was invited to Washington and held talks with the American president. Subsequently, high level contact between the two superpowers was reinvigorated, paving the road for a summit between the leaders.

Reagan and Gorbachev met in Geneva on 19-21 November 1985. It was a very personal summit with the two leaders spending a great deal of time chatting alone. No agreements were reached; indeed, the differences over SDI -- with

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[11] George Shultz, "Managing the US-Soviet Relationship over the Long Term," Department of State Bulletin, December 1984, pp. 3-4.

[12] Ronald Reagan, "The US-Soviet Relationship," Department of State Bulletin, February 1984, pp. 1-4.

Gorbachev continuing to denounce it and Reagan re-affirming his intention to go ahead with it -- were publicly stated. Yet, the dialogue between the two superpowers at the highest level was resumed and its tone was constructive. Both leaders expressed satisfaction with its progress and promised to continue it by exchanging visits. To underscore the improved climate, on New Year's Eve Reagan's good wishes to the Soviet people were televised in the USSR, and Gorbachev's greetings to the Americans were simiarly shown in the United States.

Following the Geneva summit Gorbachev advanced some new arms control proposals. The Soviet Union continued to observe a moratorium on underground nuclear tests, which it had declared on 6 August 1985, and invited the United States to do the same. Despite the fact that the Americans adamantly clung to their position over the development of defensive weapons, the Soviets went ahead with the negotiations to cut down the offensive ones. The reduction, or even complete elimination, of medium-range missiles in Europe emerged as a particularly promising item. In January 1986 Gorbachev came out with a sweeping proposal to eliminate all nuclear weapons by the year 2000. This, however, was dismissed by the Americans as mere propaganda. The United States continued with the underground nuclear testing it claimed was indispensable for the development of SDI. The Reagan administration put forward a more permissive interpretation of the ABM Treaty allowing for deployment of the defensive weapons. In May it announced that it would break the limits imposed by the SALT II Treaty by deploying extra offensive weapons.

By the late summer of 1986 a new crisis between the two superpowers ensued. The Americans arrested in New York a Soviet employee in the United Nations, Gennady Zakharov, charging him with espionage; and the Soviets reciprocated by arresting an American journalist in Moscow, Nicholas Daniloff, on similar charges. The crisis, however, was defused at a meeting between Shultz and Shevardnadze. Zakharov and Daniloff were both released and sent back home. At the same time the two foreign ministers announced that Reagan and Gorbachev would hold another summit in Reykjavik, Iceland on 11-12 October. It was not supposed to be a substitute for Gorbachev's visit to the United States, but merely a working session to advance the agenda for future negotiations between the two countries.

The summit in Reykjavik took an unexpected turn. The two leaders actually covered a broad spectrum of arms control proposals including not only drastic cuts, but even complete elimination of ballistic missiles -- indeed, as the Soviets claimed, of all nuclear weapons. The negotiations, however, stumbled over the perennial problem of SDI. The Soviets insisted upon strict observance of the ABM Treaty, preventing the deployment of defensive weapons for 15 years, while the Americans were willing to commit themselves to only 7 1/2 years. The meeting ended in evident disappointment and acrimony, with no plans for Gorbachev's visit to the United States being announced.

The Turning Point?

In the next month the Iran-*Contra* scandal broke in the United States. It was revealed that, contrary to the Reagan administration's assurances that it would never negotiate with terrorists, officials on the National Security Council close to the president had offered military aid to Iran in exchange for help towards the release of American hostages held by militant Muslims in Lebanon. Furthermore, it also came to light that some of the proceeds from the arms sales to Iran had been diverted -- by-passing the explicit prohibition by Congress -- to assist the *Contras* in Nicaragua. Several public investigations of the affair were undertaken, focusing the attention of the American public upon it.

President Reagan admitted that contacts with Iran had deteriorated into a de facto hostage for arms deal. He denied, however, any knowledge of using the money obtained from the sale of arms for the Contras. He claimed that the officials on the Security Council -- who were promptly dismissed from their posts -- concealed this from him. The affair tarnished the public image of the president. Even though no evidence proving that he had authorized the transfer of funds to the Contras was uncovered, he was blamed for not being fully in charge of important aspects of American foreign policy, and for delegating the responsibility for them to reckless assistants. In the international sphere the Iran-Contra scandal has hurt the Reagan administration in several ways. The credibility of its strongly anti-terrorist line has been undermined. In the eyes of the Arab countries the United States' neutrality in the Iraq-Iran war has been put into question. The assistance to the Contras -- although the dismissed National Security officials dramatized the need for it -- was brought back under Congress' control. Paradoxically, however, the affair had some positive effects too. To divert the attention of the American public from it, Reagan needs some spectacular success in his foreign policy. As his term comes to a close his best chance to accomplish this is to continue his summit diplomacy with Gorbachev and to crown it with a major arms control accord.

After Reykjavik the Soviet international stance has somewhat stiffened. Gorbachev has persisted in his strong opposition against the Strategic Defense Initiative and he has made it clear that he was not interested in visiting the United States unless some major progress in arms control could be achieved. In January 1987, after observing its unilateral moratorium for 17 months, the Soviet Union resumed underground nuclear testing. There was no exchange of friendly greetings between the two leaders on New Year's Eve. Nevertheless the dialogue between the two superpowers has gone on. The various broad arms control proposals explored in Reykjavik now have been taken over and scrutinized in detail at the talks between the two sides in Geneva.

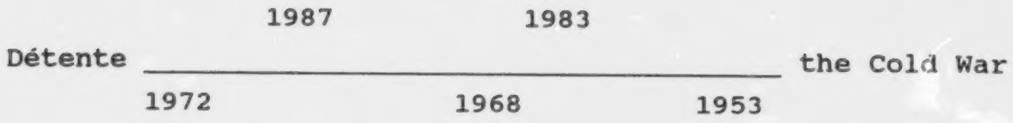
The Soviets have offered several significant concessions to advance the cause of arms control. They have agreed to negotiate an accord over medium-range missiles in Europe separate from progress in reducing the long-range offensive weapons and SDI. Furthermore, to advance such an accord they have consented, contrary to their previous position, to ignore the French and the British nuclear arsenals. By acceding to the demand to include in the deal their medium-range missiles in Asia, they have paved the way not only for reducing, but completely eliminating these weapons -- in effect, accepting the American "zero option." Finally, when the West linked an accord over medium-range missiles to eliminating the shorter-range ones -- claiming that the two should be considered together -- the Soviets assented to this "double zero option" too. During the Soviet foreign minister's visit to Washington in September 1987 a treaty along those lines was agreed to "in principle." It was formally signed at the summit between Reagan and Gorbachev, in Washington in December 1987.

The new treaty is of historic significance, for it not only restricts, but actually reduces the number of nuclear weapons on both sides. The elimination of the medium- and shorter-range missiles in Europe in itself is not that important, for in comparison with the long-range missiles they represent only a fraction of the nuclear arsenals of the two countries. But a conclusion of such an accord is bound to have an important psychological impact upon the entire pattern of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union.

It should pave the way for continuing their constructive dialogue. During Gorbachev's visit to Washington the negotiations to curb the long-range offensive weapons as well as the defensive systems were also accelerated. At the same time the possibilities of mitigating the superpowers' rivalry in the various tense spots in the Third World, notably in Afghanistan, were discussed.

The momentum of domestic politics pushes both Gorbachev and Reagan in the direction of searching for an accommodation. The tangible results of the internal reforms in the USSR will not be felt for a while, and, meanwhile, Gorbachev -- to fend off his opponents -- could use a major international breakthrough. And in the final phase of his presidency -- marred by the Iran-Contra affair -- Reagan, likewise, needs a major international success to assure his place in history as a man of peace.

Yet, it is not just domestic political momentum, but, above all, the very logic of their relationship which pushes the two superpowers towards mitigating their rivalry. Both sides recognize that in the nuclear age a war between them would end in mutual disaster. Consequently, they have no choice but to try to control the arms race and to mitigate the local conflicts in the Third World which threaten to escalate into a nuclear confrontation. It was exactly these international dynamics which made the United States and the Soviet Union move away from the Cold War and resume efforts at détente. There is no question that after reaching the low point in 1983 their relations have improved considerably. They may not have as yet reached the high point of détente set in 1972, but they may well be on the road there. Graphically, then, the entire post-war pattern of US-Soviet relations could be presented like this:



It is important to note that in the current process of improving relations between the two superpowers the achievements of détente from the 1970s have not been completely lost. On the contrary, they have served as an example to be emulated and, indeed, expanded. They set the goals which are to be sought, provided the diplomatic channels through which they could be pursued, and last but not least, established personal contacts which have made the resumption of East-West dialogue easier. No two historical situations are identical, so the progress of détente in the early 1970s and the second half of the 1980s is different; yet no lessons of history should be ignored, but built upon to achieve further progress.

Relations between the two superpowers are now at a turning point. If Reagan manages to strike an accord with Gorbachev in the remaining period of his presidency, the trend towards détente will continue, resembling the situation from 1972 and--especially since this would involve not only restricting, but also reducing the arms race -- it may even go beyond those earlier achievements. If Reagan, however, fails to live up to the occasion, not everything would be lost, for in that case Gorbachev could resume the efforts at détente in 1989 with a new American president. Even if in the meantime Gorbachev falls -- although it would probably slow things down -- the progress of détente still need not be arrested, for his successors, in view of the casualities of nuclear age, would really have little choice but to continue along this road.[13]

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[13] Gorbachev makes a persuasive argument for Russia being an integral part of Europe in his book, see: "Perestroika...," op.cit., Chapter 6.

Into the 1990s

The choices for the remainder of the 1980s, thus, are quite clear. From there the contours of the problems of the 1990s and their possible solutions are beginning to emerge. Naturally, in the modern, complex world there will be new developments which cannot be anticipated today. Yet, it is also certain that most of the major contemporary trends, although with evolutionary changes, will continue into the 21st century.

The basically bipolar international system which emerged after World War II is here to stay for some time to come. Its continuation will be assured by the overwhelming military power of both the United States and the Soviet Union which in the near future is unlikely to be matched by any other country. Yet bipolarity, after its re-assertion in the early 1980s, may be gradually diluted. In the first place this is due to the internal difficulties with which both superpowers are faced.

The economic recovery in the United States may be just a passing phase. Massive expenditures on armaments are contributing to mounting budget deficits and the growing foreign debt is aggravated by the loss of technological competitiveness to Japan. There is also the downward pressure on the US dollar leading to higher interest rates. All of these trends do not augur well for the American economy. Unless they are soon reversed the present boom may be followed by another recession, or even, as is sometimes feared, by a major depression. Under Reagan, moreover, the benefits of economic progress have not been evenly distributed -- amidst general prosperity there are pockets of poverty and social ills which in the event of an economic breakdown would be intensified and would carry over into the political arena.

There is also an inherent weakness in the American political system. Since the 1960s one president after another seems to have been overwhelmed by the immense domestic and foreign tasks facing him. Evidently the US constitution does not make it easy to reconcile the demands of democratic society and a welfare state with the worldwide obligations of a superpower. In the early stages of his administration, and even well into his second term, it appeared that Reagan had escaped this dilemma and had managed to restore the presidential authority. Yet, the Iran-Contra affair has undermined his prestige as well. No doubt, his successors will have to cope with this problem as well.

The Soviet Union is clearly at a turning point. If Gorbachev fails to carry out his internal changes and the country stagnates once again, each next attempt at reform -- as the problems become more acute -- would be more difficult. A lack of economic and social progress could spill over into the political sphere. A continued decay would undermine stability in the country and might even lead to a popular explosion.

The danger of such a development may be increased by the present demographic trends. The birth rate in the non-European regions of the Soviet Union -- and particularly among the Muslims -- is higher than among the European nationalities. The Russians are losing their majority position and by 2000 their share of the total population may go down to 45 per cent. The greater demographic weight of the non-Europeans may make them seek more political influence and even autonomy. Among the Muslims such aspirations may be intensified by the revival of fundamentalist Islam in neighbouring Iran and Afghanistan. The anti-Russian sentiments have never been entirely extinguished in the Baltic republics and the Ukraine. Should the nationalist ferment coincide with a general malaise in the country, it could culminate in the disruption of the USSR.

Yet, in the case of both superpowers these pessimistic predictions are just long-term scenarios of little immediate relevance. Neither the Marxist vision of an approaching decay of capitalism in the United States, nor the expectation of an imminent collapse of the Soviet Union which has been so often voiced in the West, are soon going to come true. For the rest of the century neither of these two countries is likely to be decisively weakened internally.

The United States is a vigorous and vibrant nation whose internal problems are largely conditions of an affluent society. Moreover, the traditional virtues of the American people -- the inventiveness and ability to adjust to new circumstances -- must not be overlooked. In a democratic system, possible errors by the executive can be corrected by an alert public and an influential Congress. The United States remains an immensely powerful country, conscious of its major international role and ready to perform it.

Similarly, the Soviet Union is not on the verge of catastrophe. In comparison with its past crises -- revolution, civil war, collectivization of agriculture, accelerated industrialization, Stalin's mass terror, World War II and the Cold War -- its present problems pale into insignificance. There is no reason to believe that, if handled with energy and skill, they will not be overcome. The proverbial Russian characteristics of obedience and endurance -- which make them close ranks particularly at times of stress -- should not be ignored. They are an intensely proud nation ready to undergo great sacrifices to uphold the international position of their state.

Thus, barring some major upheaval, for the rest of the century the two superpowers will remain the major players in the international arena. This very situation will push them both to continue their rivalry, and at the same time, paradoxically, to seek cooperation with each other.

Ideological Competition

During the climax of détente in the early 1970s -- as testified by the Nixon-Brezhnev declaration of principles -- ideological competition between the two superpowers was mitigated. This stemmed primarily from the desire to avoid a nuclear conflict, but also reflected the growing disenchantment by both sides with their respective ideological visions -- as confronted with the existing realities -- of the direction the world was taking. Yet, the subsequent revival in both countries of the ideological zeal has indicated how deeply entrenched are their mutual negative stereotypes.

The ideological rivalry between the US and the USSR goes back even beyond 1945. It has roots in the Communist revolution in Russia in 1917. By proclaiming as their goal the victory of socialism over capitalism in the world, the Bolsheviks challenged the existing international order. By intervening in Russia on behalf of the counter-revolutionaries, the Western powers -- including America -- conveyed the impression that they found the Bolsheviks intolerable. In the following years the United States shunned the Soviet Union, with diplomatic relations between the two countries being established only in 1933.

Indeed, the differences between the Americans and the Russians go still deeper into their history. As early as 1830 Alexis de Tocqueville, while correctly anticipating the rise of America and Russia as the world's two greatest powers, also emphasized their basic dissimilarities.[14] The first "depends on the interests of the individual person, and allows the force and intelligence of individuals to act freely without directing them. The second in some ways concentrates all the power of society in one man."[15]

The modern version of the old difference between America and Russia is their controversy over human rights. The United States and its major allies claim to be repulsed by states which violate democratic freedoms. Indeed, the Americans look on the Communist governments as more prone to disregard the rights of other nations as well, and, therefore, as unreliable partners in international cooperation. The continued emphasis by the western democracies on the observance of human rights in the Communist orbit, thus, is not only motivated by their concern about people's freedom there, but also by their own security interests. The trouble is that these two objectives are not always compatible.

Western efforts to promote democratic values in the Communist countries are as legitimate as Soviet efforts to propagate their own version of Marxism in the West. The western democracies cannot remain indifferent to the violations of human rights and the suppression of people who share their ideals. Were they not to take a stand over these matters they would lose their self-respect, and probably the respect of their Communist adversaries too. In promoting democratic values throughout the Communist orbit, however, the West has to be practical and recognize the limits inherent in such an activity. It is not in a position to impose adherence by force -- any more than the Soviet Union is able to impose its Marxist vision upon the Western countries. Risking a nuclear conflict to uphold human rights would be, of course, senseless -- for nuclear war would obliterate oppressors and oppressed alike.

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[14] Alexis de Tocqueville, De la démocracie en Amérique, Paris, 1961. Concluding passage in Vol. 1.

[15] Ibid.

Yet, even if the West could change the Soviet system upon pain of war it should not do so. For true democracy cannot be imposed from outside, but has to be nurtured in native soil. For centuries the Russians have been reared under autocracy and democratic values are alien to them. They compensate, moreover, for their lack of freedom with pride in the present position of the USSR as one of the two superpowers. They resent any criticism of their system and are unlikely to adopt any foreign models, especially under duress. Unfortunately, the human rights activists in the USSR do not represent the mainstream, but only a marginal element of Soviet society.

The West is in a better position to help the Soviet dissidents through détente than through conflict. The progress of détente and human rights are not identical but in many respects they complement each other. Under détente, if only to project a more peaceful image among the western democracies, the Soviet government is constrained from resorting to widespread repression against their own people. Thus, during the period of détente in the early 1970s the Soviet authorities were more lenient towards the dissidents, but with the rise of new tensions in East-West relations they turned more to coercive measures.

It is also not accidental that Gorbachev's efforts to improve relations with the West coincided with a more tolerant attitude towards the human rights activists in the USSR. His efforts to expand democratization at home are in the first place aimed at arousing more initiative among the Soviet people, but he is obviously also conscious of the positive impact of such a course abroad. Yet there should be no illusion about it, democratization is not democracy. Nor are there any signs that Gorbachev plans to move in that direction. For some time to come the one-party system in the Soviet Union is there to stay. Greater popular participation in the government will remain confined within these limits. But even restricted changes, which nevertheless reduce the gap between Soviet Communism and the western democracies, are useful.

The opposing ideological clichés could be mitigated by cultural exchanges too. Fortunately, by and large these were preserved even during the low stage in political relations in the early 1980s. Artistic and scholarly exchanges helped to soften the hostile images on both sides, and joint sporting events -- and here the mutual boycott of the Olympic Games was particularly regrettable -- encouraged the spirit of fair play between them. The continued contacts between the specialists in international affairs assisted in keeping the East-West dialogue alive. All of these activities, thus, should not only be maintained, but expanded.

Finally, it must not be overlooked that many socialist values are accepted in the West. Some of the western democracies have been ruled by socialists, and virtually all of them, including the United States, have embraced the goals of the welfare state. In the modern world, thus, communism and democracy are moving closer together, though this does not mean that they are converging. Russia's unique historical experiences will make it cultivate its own ideological values and will continue to keep it apart from the West. In a basically bipolar world, if only as rationalizations of their policies, the two superpowers' negative mutual sterotypes will tend to re-assert themselves. The ideological barriers between the two sides, therefore, can be lowered, perhaps even substantially so, but not completely eliminated. For the rest of the 20th century the central factor mitigating the East-West rivalry will continue to be the military balance, and above all the nuclear stalemate, between them.

At the same time it must not be overlooked that the United States and the Soviet Union have a great deal in common. As Alexis de Tocqueville already observed they are both the offsprings of Europe who have carried a process of modernization across the North American and the northern Asian continent. Thus, together -- all of their ideological differences notwithstanding -- they form what might be labelled a "Greater Europe," stretching all the way from Alaska eastward to Kamchatka.

The Arms Race and Arms Control

It is a paradox that nuclear weapons, while posing the greatest threat to the modern world, are also a crucial element of stability in it. The system of mutual assured destruction -- based on a survivable retaliatory force in the nuclear arsenals of the two superpowers -- makes war between them highly unlikely, although not impossible. A nuclear exchange could be triggered by human or technical error, by the escalation of some local conflict beyond control of both sides, or the belief -- correct or erroneous -- by one of them that it had gained the upper hand over the other. Furthermore, the nuclear genie, now that it has been released by the human brain, cannot be put back into the bottle; at best it can only be controlled. It is improbable that Gorbachev's proposal of January 1986, to completely eliminate nuclear weapons by the year 2000, will be realized. Yet, at least some progress in this direction -- even though it will remain an immensely complex task -- is feasible.

Since 1945 military technology has made enormous progress. By the early 1980s the superpowers had developed weapons with which they could annihiliate each other -- and not just once, but, given the chance, several times. An American submarine-launched Poseidon missile carries 10 nuclear warheads, each with 20 times more power than the atomic bomb dropped by the Americans on Hiroshima. A Soviet land-based SS-18 which could render similar devastation can pinpoint its target in North America with an accuracy of 300 feet.

By the mid-1980s further progress in developing new weapons had been made by both superpowers. Both land-based and the submarine-launched ballistic missiles, armed with multiple nuclear warheads, have been perfected. Stealth bombers, able to evade radar detection, are being developed. Cruise missiles, to be launched from land, sea and air, have been deployed. These are inexpensive, small, and thus easily moved and hidden, and they fly so low that they are difficult to track on radar. Since the Reagan administration initiated SDI, the development of defensive weapons has been accelerated. These include such exotic arms as laser and particle beams, some of which are to be based in space.

The problems of arms control, thus, have become more urgent, but also more complicated. Not only to stop, but even just to slow down the nuclear arms race is increasingly difficult. To find equivalence among the wide range of different weapons on both sides, and then to link them together for negotiation, requires a great deal of skill and imagination. There are controversies about what actually constitutes a long or a medium-range missile or bomber, especially when the latter are deployed by one bloc in the vicinity of another. These are tangled with the short-range and the battlefield nuclear weapons. The growing mobility and miniaturization of many of those weapons, moreover, compounds the problems of effective verification of any arms control agreements. The expansion of defensive arms will complicate these matters even more. For their very definition is blurred -- defensive weapons which serve to protect the offensive ones could be used not only in parrying an attack, but also in launching one. These difficulties, no doubt, will greatly complicate an agreement to reduce the two superpowers' long-range missiles by 50 percent in time for the next summit in Moscow planned for the spring of 1988. Moreover, finding equivalence in nuclear arms is linked to the problem of maintaining a balance in conventional forces. The more progress there is in resolving the former problem, the more urgent becomes the task of overcoming the latter.

Yet, arms control could, and should, be advanced. After all, mankind, having invented such sophisticated weapons, should be able, if determined to do so, to control them. There is no more profound and urgent international task today. Avoiding a nuclear holocast must remain the world leaders' top priority. Progress on arms control moreover, is of central significance in improving relations between the two superpowers. Arms control and détente are not identical, but they are largely complementary. There is an important psychological interdependence between the two. The more the arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union is mitigated, the easier it is for them in an atmosphere of mutual trust to resolve their political disputes; and, conversely, the better the climate in political relations between the two superpowers, the better are their chances to reach new arms accords.

It is in this context that an agreement to eliminate the medium- and shorter-range missiles in Europe is significant. Even if it only marginally reduces the nuclear arsenals of the two superpowers, it adds momentum to the betterment of their overall relations. In an improved political climate, it could pave the way for future arms control accords -- on the one hand over the long-range offensive and the defensive weapons, and on the other hand over the conventional forces.

The next two most important items for negotiations would be the reduction of the long-range missiles by 50 percent and restrictions upon placing new defensive systems. The former should pose no great difficulty, for the two sides tentatively agreed on it in Reykjavik and subsequently have repeatedly emphasized their support. It is the latter which poses a major obstacle, not only in itself, but -- since the two deals are closely linked together -- in blocking any further progress on arms control. Yet, the Reagan administration is determined to press on with SDI -- and former American Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger, even hinted that its first phase of deployment would take place in the early 1990s -- while the Kremlin is equally adamant in opposition to it.

With the strides made towards SDI by the United States, and no doubt similar (although less publicized) advances by the Soviet Union, the development of at least some defensive weapons probably can no longer be prevented. Yet some curbs on their deployment could still be imposed. A strict observance of the ABM Treaty for 10 years -- falling between the periods proposed by the two sides in Reykjavik -- could be a fair compromise. Should relations between the superpowers improve substantially by the end of this term, the deployment of defensive weapons may be judged unnecessary. Meanwhile, other important steps to mitigate the arms race between them, notably by restricting underground nuclear testing, could be taken.

The chances of eliminating all nuclear weapons are remote. But their substantial reduction -- lowering the danger of military confrontation between the two superpowers -- is possible, and certainly should be tried. At some stage the other major nuclear powers -- Britain, France and China-- should also be brought into the framework of the Geneva negotiations. Meanwhile the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968 -- prohibiting the development of such weapons by other countries -- should be strictly observed.

The progress in curbing nuclear armaments should be accompanied by measures to control chemical and biological weapons. Of course, it should also be linked to a simultaneous reduction of conventional forces -- especially in Europe where they are most densely concentrated and where the two superpowers directly face each other. The Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction talks should be reinvigorated and perhaps linked with the CSCE talks -- thus including not only the members of the two alliances, but neutral countries also. Military stability in Europe could also be enhanced by thinning down the offensive forces in the heart of the continent, as was proposed by the late Swedish premier, Olof Palme, and more recently by the Polish leader, Wojciech Jaruzelski.

All of those arms control and disarmament measures would be extremely helpful in improving the climate in East-West relations. Yet, given that the military threat would be reduced but not completely eliminated, while the conditions of bipolarity and ideological competition could be only mitigated, it is unrealistic to expect that in the next decade the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union can be completely terminated. The best we can hope for is a continued gradual movement away from the Cold War towards détente, going even beyond that which existed in 1972. Graphically it could be presented like this:

1990s 1987 1983
Détente ______________________________ the Cold War
1972 1968 1953

In order to go beyond détente and to reach the stage of entente, i.e. the elimination of all conflict and its replacement by cooperation, an even greater transformation in the relationship between the two superpowers would be needed. This, however, would not be entirely dependent only upon Washington and Moscow, but would also involve broader changes in the international sphere. Above all, it would be affected by the evolution of the two alliances and by the unfolding events in the Third World.

Unity in the Western Alliance

After World War II the United States and the Soviet Union reigned supreme in the international sphere; and since 1945 in absolute terms their respective economic, and especially military, power has greatly increased. Yet, at the same time their relative influence in the world has decreased. To some extent this is because, engaged in their protracted rivalry, the two superpowers have largely stalemated each other. Their immense nuclear arsenals are effective in maintaining the system of mutual deterrence, but -- if only because it could trigger a conflict between them -- cannot be turned against other countries. For the same reason their conventional forces must be used with discrimination. At times, thus, the objectives of the two superpowers can be actually frustrated by the smaller nations. Since the late 1970s the US has suffered repeated diplomatic humiliations at the hands of Iran, and the USSR has proved unable to overcome militarily the Mujahideen resistance in Afghanistan.

In the post-war period some former powers have recovered their military, and especially their economic, potential, and new ones have arisen from among the former colonial countries. The two superpowers remain undisputed leaders in their respective alliances, but their dominant roles in each bloc have been reduced. This trend, evident in 1980s, in all likelihood will continue into the 1990s. The basically bipolar system, thus, will stay, but it will be loosened. In conditions of détente the changes in each alliance will reinforce changes in the other. With the diminishing external threat the smaller countries need for protection by the superpowers will be reduced, so the two blocs will be transformed, with the lesser partners having more influence. These countries' own traditions in international politics, often different from those of the superpowers, thus, will be more strongly accentuated.

NATO's European members take a view of East-West relations different in some respects from that of the United States. This stems not only from their geographical location, but also from their own historical experiences. Geared to the tradition of realpolitik dominant on their continent, they are less prone than the Americans to ideological aberrations, and see the East-West conflict more in purely geopolitical terms. They accept the United States leadership in the Western alliance because it protects them from a potential threat from the Soviet Union, but they tend to look at the Americans as nouveaux riches, who are not sophisticated enough, and occasionally must even be restrained, in international politics. Their view of the Russians, however, is even less complimentary. For if the Western Europeans consider North America as essentially an offspring of Europe, they regard Russia as Europe's hinterland with a heavy admixture of Asian influence, which makes it more given to unpredictable and harsh behaviour in the international sphere; although some sense of historical affinity with the Russians -- at least as far as the Urals -- is also present among the Western Europeans, and they do hold a grudging respect for the USSR's power.

The concept of détente held in Washington, thus, is not completely shared by its partners across the Atlantic. There is an ambivalence on the part of the Western Europeans that is inherent in their status as junior members in the alliance. On the one hand they would like the American security shield over them -- protecting them from the Russians -- to continue. But on the other hand, under the US nuclear umbrella, they would like to promote their own objectives, and especially to bring the two parts of divided Europe closer together, which would also diminish the threat from the East. This Western European dilemma is reflected in what may appear as at times an inchoate, and even contradictory, pattern of behaviour on the international scene.

During the 1980s the United States has remained unquestionably the senior partner in the Atlantic alliance. It has continued to extend its nuclear cover over Western Europe, and, to make this more credible, since 1983 has been deploying its medium-range missiles there. Any suggestions about reducing the American conventional forces in Europe have been rejected by the Reagan administration. Overall military strategy has been debated in the NATO's councils, but ultimately, and especially in nuclear matters, it has been determined by Washington.

The Western European countries have continued to accept the American leadership. Political trends among them have been generally favourable to the United States. In 1987 the Christian Democrats were returned to power in West Germany and the Conservatives in Britian. In the parliamentary elections in France in 1986 the neo-Gaullists defeated the socialists; but the Gaullist wing led by Jacques Chirac, which has emerged dominant, has been more pro-American than the one which held power in the 1970s under Giscard d'Estaing. Anyway, Mitterand stays as head of state until the presidential elections in the spring of 1988 and any new thrust in France's foreign policy remains in abeyance.

Meanwhile, the Western European socialists, who in the past have advocated lessening their countries' dependence upon the United States, have either suffered electoral defeats or have mitigated their stance. In 1987 the Social Democrats in West Germany and the Labourites in Britian -- who both harboured reservations about NATO's nuclear strategy -- came out losers. In 1986 the socialist government in Spain won a referendum confirming the country's membership in NATO, and followed this the next year with a resounding electoral success. Soon afterwards the Portuguese social democrats, firmly committed to supporting the Western alliance, scored a decisive electoral victory. In Greece the socialist government first elected in 1981, and then re-elected in 1985, has abstained from implementing its earlier goal of removing the American bases from that country.

At the same time the Communists have suffered repeated political reversals in Western Europe. In France in 1981 they were admitted, as junior partners, into a coalition government with the socialists, but they were expelled in 1984, and were solidly trounced in the parliamentary elections in 1986. The next year the Communists also suffered substantial losses in the elections in Italy. In Spain and Portugal the Communist parties have been altogether eclipsed as major political forces.

As the United States has intensified its dialogue with the Soviet Union in the second half of the 1980s, several of the Western European governments have voiced reservations over at least some of its aspects. They were distinctly unhappy over the far-reaching proposals for arms control reviewed by Reagan and Gorbachev in Reykjavik, which they perceived as possibly leading towards the removal of the US nuclear umbrella over them. Initially the Western Europeans, and especially the West Germans, also objected to the American-Soviet agreement to dismantle the medium- and shorter-range missiles. Ultimately they consented to the "double zero" deal, but they have continued to insist that this must be followed by negotiations to reduce the conventional forces. And until this is accomplished they are adamantly opposed to any plans for unilateral cuts in the strength of the American garrisons in Europe.

Evidently, any de-coupling -- as it is called -- of the defence of Western Europe from the American strategic nuclear arsenal sends shivers through the backbones of the political leaders there. They are worried that in the event of a limited Soviet attack against Western Europe the Americans could be reluctant to respond with long-range nuclear weapons -- knowing that it could lead to a similar USSR action against the US. Abandoned by the United States, the Western Europeans fear that they would be left at the mercy of the Soviet Union.

Such a scenario, however, seems highly improbable. First of all there are no signs of the United States' retreating into a 'fortress America.' Reagan has been consistently committed to the defence of Western Europe and it is unlikely that his successors -- if only because the control of the eastern Atlantic shore is crucial to US security -- would change this policy. The uncertainty over American reaction in itself constitutes a powerful deterrent preventing the Soviets from attacking Western Europe. Considering the political trends in the USSR any such thought seems likely to be far removed from the current concerns of its leaders. Yet, the pessimistic scenarios, rooted in their precarious post-war history, are still deeply ingrained upon the minds of many Western Europeans and form an important part of their perception of international reality. They are wary, thus, of any aspects of détente which may lead to the weakening of the western alliance.

The Rise of Western Europe

Yet, there is another side to the coin in the Western European countries' policies. They also have vested interests in many aspects of détente -- some even going beyond those of the United States. They are well aware, of course, that any lessening of the East-West tensions diminishes the danger of a conflict on their continent. They also dislike the bipolar system, in that it reduces their status in the international sphere. Occasionally they even refer to it as a sort of American-Soviet condominium condemning the divided Europe to perpetual dependence upon the two superpowers. Harking back to their past glory they would like to play once again -- and this is as true today of Margaret Thatcher as it was in the 1960s of Charles de Gaulle -- a greater role in world affairs.

The Western Europeans want to overcome the present division of Europe. It is not only because this would help to reduce the military confrontation in the heart of their continent. They would also like to restore their long historical bonds with the Eastern Europeans and free them from the Russian suzerainty. Naturally, the West Germans, who are separated from their brethren in the east, and in this respect there is no difference between the Christian and social democrats, feel particuarly strongly about this. In a broader perspective the Western Europeans would like to be the bridge between the two peripheries of their continent: America and Russia. They know that in such a "Greater Europe" -- stretching from Alaska eastward to Kamchatka -- their central role on the international scene would be greatly enhanced. To accomplish these ends, while cultivating their American connection, the Western Europeans have also striven to build bridges to the east. Above all, they have patiently, but persistently, developed their own strength.

Particularly in the economic sphere Western Europe already commands a formidable influence. The European Community (EC) which in 1980 was composed of nine members -- including the four major industrial powers: West Germany, France, Britain and Italy -- was expanded in 1981 by the inclusion of Greece, and in 1986 by the addition of Spain and Portugal. Its combined population now is 325 million -- compared with 280 million in the Soviet Union and 240 in the United States -- and it is the single largest trading bloc in the world. Since the 1970s the Western European countries-- and especially West Germany -- have substantially expanded their trade with, and supported it with no less impressive credits to, Eastern Europe and the USSR. This in itself provides them with strong clout in their dealings with the Communist bloc.

In economic affairs the Western Europeans have also occasionally stood up to the Americans. After winning their dispute with Washington over the construction of the gas pipeline from the USSR in 1982, they have been increasingly engaged in a confrontation with the United States over massive European agricultural subsidies. At times the Americans, who see these as detrimental to their own farmers, have threatened retaliatory measures. The matter came to a head at the GATT meeting in 1986, and again over feed grain sales to Spain early in 1987. Each time those differences were resolved by a compromise or at least were shelved. Yet, beneath the surface, the divergent trading interests of the EC and the US persist and, especially as the protectionist sentiments on both sides of the Atlantic tend to grow, may one day erupt in a major dispute.

Political integration in the EC countries has been slower than the economic, but it also has advanced. It has been assisted by the fact that by now all its member-countries are democracies -- as, incidentally, are all the Western European neutrals and Finland. It has also been helped by the EC's overlapping membership with NATO--Ireland being the only neutral country in the EC, and Norway and Turkey being the only European members of NATO not participating in the EC. Still there have been important differences among the EC countries as to how far they should move on the road towards political integration. Especially France, with its proud tradition of independence, and Britain, conscious of its special relationship with the United States, have been reluctant to submerge their sovereignty in a supranational community. Yet, the signing of the Single European Act which simplifies the process of joint decision-making in the EC -- and which with the Irish consent last spring has by now been ratified by all its members -- testifies to the progress in the direction of political integration.

Meanwhile, the EC has already developed through regular consultations among their governments -- including regular meetings at the highest levels -- a fairly effective system of coordinating their foreign policies. In relations with the Communist bloc they have adopted similar positions over the crises in Afghanistan and Poland. They have also closely cooperated at the different Conference on Cooperation and Security in Europe fora. During the heightened tensions between the two superpowers the EC countries prevented the CSCE process from breaking down, but at the same time used it to press the Communist bloc to show greater respect for human rights at the follow-up meeting in Madrid, and extracted from it concessions at the Confidence-Building Measures conference in Stockholm.

Over various international problems, however, the Western Europeans have opposed the Americans too. They have refused to go along with the United States' interpretation of the political conflict in Central America as primarily caused by the outside Communist intervention, and, instead have continued to treat it as basically stemming from unresolved indigenous economic and social problems. To emphasize this, most of them, with France being the most ostentatious, have preserved normal relations with the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. The Western Europeans have often also followed a different course from the Americans in the Middle East. They have been generally less supportive than the US of Israel and they have tried, Spain in particular, to maintain good relations with the Arab states. In 1986 all of the major Western European powers, except Britain, irked the Reagan administration by their refusal to assist in the American bombing of Libya. The next year they adopted a somewhat more reserved stance than Washington in the Persian Gulf crisis.

The Western European countries command, and increasingly so, substantial military power on their own. Next to the two superpowers France and Britain are the two major nuclear powers in the world. Their nuclear weapons are at present undergoing modernization which will considerably improve their accuracy and expand their destructive potential. West Germany with its half a million strong army, in terms of conventional forces, is the second most powerful country in Europe after the Soviet Union. They play, thus, a major role in preserving the East-West military balance on the European continent, helping to keep the Communist bloc in check.

Their weighty military contribution provides the Western European powers with a significant voice in the NATO councils. They keep a watchful eye there over the United States. In the early 1980s they were distinctly uneasy over the evolving American strategy and especially of the claims that a limited nuclear war -- which they sarcastically observed would be 'limited' to their continent -- could actually be waged. Subsequently, over SDI the Western European governments have divided. Britain and West Germany -- if only to profit from the spinoff of its technology -- decided to participate in SDI, while France -- to underline its total independence in nuclear matters - stayed out. Yet, all of them have doubts whether a perfect astrodome protecting the West from attacking Soviet missiles could be designed, and, if so, whether it could be extended beyond North America to protect Western Europe as well.

With the unfolding of the new American nuclear strategy, and particularly after Reykjavik, where Reagan moved farther than ever before from the old system of nuclear deterrence, discussions among the major Western European countries over military matters visibly intensified. Tentative plans for linking the French nuclear weaponry with the West German conventional forces have been explored. With British-French relations markedly warming up, the possibility of combining their nuclear arsenals has been suggested. By making these initiatives public the Western Europeans have clearly signalled that they do not intend to be passive observers in the negotiations between the two superpowers. They want to have their say in the evolving East-West relations too.

This does not mean that the Western European powers will stand in the way of progress in arms control and disarmament. They are already involved in the negotiations to reduce military confrontation in Europe conducted at the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction forum and within the context of the CSCE; and when the time is ripe France and Britain would probably be amenable to joining the US and the USSR in the Geneva talks to cut down the number of nuclear weapons. The Western Europeans are also likely to continue promoting the reduction of political tensions in Europe. But this will largely depend upon the developments in the eastern part of that continent.

Evolution in Eastern Europe

The Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO), is composed of the Soviet Union and the six Eastern European states. Four of them: Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland actually border on the USSR while Bulgaria in the south, and East Germany in the west, represent its flanks. The WTO is tightly controlled by Moscow. There are several reasons for this. The discrepancy between the alliance's leader and its partners is greater than in the West. The total population of the six smaller Warsaw Pact countries amounts to some 115 million and their economies are both incomparably weaker than the Soviet one and largely dependent on it. The USSR moreover, is the only nuclear power in the bloc and its conventional forces are deployed in bulk in the territories of its four northern members, and especially in East Germany. The WTO, being composed exclusively of Communist states, is held together by ideological ties.

The Soviet Union clearly considers its dominant role in Eastern Europe as essential to its security interests. This provides Moscow with a key role on the continent as a whole, and especially with control over the central German question. The existence of Communist governments in Eastern Europe also serves as a buffer protecting the USSR from ideological influence by the western democracies. The Soviets, thus, insist -- as the developments in Poland in 1980-81 once again demonstrated -- upon adherence to Communism by all the states in the region. Yet, many of the Eastern European people, as their periodic rebellions against the Communist governments have indicated, resent this. They would like to free themselves from Moscow's suzerainty and to restore their traditionally close bonds with Western Europe.

Still, over the years the situation in that region has been evolving too. Communism has been preserved everywhere, but within its limits Moscow has been tolerant of various Eastern European states moving closer towards democratization and autonomy. In the south since the late 1940s Yugoslavia, and since the mid-1960s Albania, have adopted independent courses in both their domestic and their foreign policies. By now the USSR seems to be reconciled to these facts; when the Yugoslav leader, Josif Tito and the Albanian leader, Enver Hoxha died in 1980 and 1985 respectively, the Soviets did not use these occasions to meddle in the internal affairs of either country. Since the mid-1960s Romania, although staying as a WTO member and maintaining an orthodox and oppressive Communist system at home, has followed a foreign policy often at variance with that of the USSR.

In the northern tier of Eastern European states, which is even more crucial to the Soviet security interests, there have been gradual changes too. Since the late 1960s Hungary has adopted a comprehensive programme of economic reforms -- allowing at least partially for the restoration of the market mechanism -- which was consolidated in 1983. In Poland in 1986 the government offered a sweeping amnesty to the political prisoners and generally has shown itself tolerant of the opposition. Solidarity has remained banned, but the scope of intellectual and especially religious freedom -- as was demonstrated by the visits of John Paul II in 1983 and again in 1987 -- has been steadily expanded. East Germany has developed extensive economic, and even some political, ties with West Germany. In 1987 the East German Communist leader paid an official visit to Bonn.

Like the Soviet Union, the Eastern European Communist states are badly in need of reform. Since the 1970s the economic situation in the region -- with Romania and Poland being particularly badly hit -- has markedly deteriorated. While in the early 1970s the aggregate annual growth in national income for the six WTO countries was 7.3 percent, by the mid-1980s it had declined to 2 percent. The reasons are the same as in the USSR -- the obsolete and rigid system has become an impediment to economic progress and urgently requires a major overhaul. Unless this is done soon the economic crises are likely to be transformed into political ones. The declining standard of living may produce discontent among the workers, culminating in a popular upheaval similar to that in Poland in 1980-81. In all four northern countries in the region there are vocal groups of dissidents demanding not only economic, but also political reforms. Yet, most of the Eastern European governments have been slow to respond to these challenges. Like the Soviet Union in the late stages of

Brezhnev's rule they have largely stagnated -- with the leaders in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria by now all being in their mid-seventies.

There is little question that the reforms undertaken recently in the Soviet Union will add momentum to changes in Eastern Europe. Gorbachev would clearly like the Communist bloc to move in unison, and the imminent departure of several bloc leaders may give him an opportunity to replace them with younger and more energetic men. Yet, carrying out reforms in the region will be an arduous task fraught with political danger. As in the Soviet Union they will run into the stone wall of bureaucracy; and the delicate transitional phase, involving economic dislocations and sacrifices, may be resented by the adversely affected segments of the populace. The political instability at the top may only encourage popular ferment.

Indeed, implementing the necessary reforms may prove to be even harder in Eastern Europe than in the USSR. The Eastern Europeans, being closer to Western Europe, have higher expectations for their standard of living than do the Russians. Their political traditions are influenced by the West too, so they may not be content with reforms confined to Communism, but may press for its replacement with democracy. Their resentment of Soviet suzerainty, never far below the surface, may push them to seek national independence. It is quite possible, then, that in one country or another in the region these developments might culminate in a popular explosion.

A new rebellion in Eastern Europe would undoubtedly have important international consequences. Gorbachev is interested in, and even encourages the evolution of Communism in the region, but he certainly would not like to see it dismantled.

Thus, faced with a popular upheaval in any Eastern European country, having as its aim the adoption of a western-like democracy or a withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, he would probably not hesitate to intervene militarily. For if he were to abstain from such a step and impair what most of the Russians consider as their basic security interests, he could gravely endanger his political position at home. Yet, another Soviet intervention in Eastern Europe would have serious repercussions in East-West relations. Its impact would be even more profound than that of the suppression of Solidarity in Poland in 1981, which at least was carried out by Polish forces. It would be more like the vanquishing of the Hungarian uprising in 1956 or of the Czechoslovak upheaval in 1968. As such it would represent a major setback to East-West détente.

The changes in the direction of modernization and democratization in Eastern Europe which provide the peoples there with greater freedom certainly deserve the sympathy of the western democracies. By reducing the gap dividing the two parts of the European continent they are also in the West's interests and should be supported by it. The western ability to influence the developments in the region is, of course, restricted, but it is not altogether absent. Trade and economic aid, expanded cultural and human contacts, and even discriminate diplomatic pressure, could all be used to encourage various Eastern European governments to proceed along the road of internal reform. In a condition of détente all of these steps should be even more effective.

Yet, it is also important that the changes in Eastern Europe should proceed in an orderly and peaceful manner. Any explosion there which would lead either to the ouster of Gorbachev and stopping the process of reforms in the USSR, or to a Soviet intervention and an arrest of the progress of détente -- would not be in the interests of the West. Indeed, it would not be in the interests of the Eastern European peoples either. A new stagnation in the Communist bloc and a revival of the Cold War between East and West would make their lives worse, not better.

The best ultimate prospect for the Eastern Europeans, even more than for the Western ones, would be the emergence of a "Greater Europe" -- including the two central parts of the continent as well as its two peripheries. To accomplish this the two opposing alliances need not necessarily be disbanded; it would suffice if they could be gradually transformed, becoming less threatening to each other. Within such an international context the existing ties within each bloc could be overlaid with new bonds cutting across the old divide. With steadily expanding cooperation between them the two great alliances could cease to be a threat and be converted into a central element of stability in the modern world.

The Pacific Rim

Europe has been, and remains, the main theatre of East-West confrontation. During the climax of the Cold War, however, the rivalry between the two superpowers spread first into the Far East and then into Southeast Asia. Both the United States and the Soviet Union established their own systems of alliances there. These still exist, but since the 1950s each has undergone substantial changes.

The United States developed a security system stretching along virtually the entire Pacific Rim, including Japan, South Korea, at one time South Vietnam, and the Philippines as well as Australia and New Zealand. The chief American partner in the region has been Japan. During the post-war occupation the Americans installed democracy in that country and since granting it independence in 1951 they have protected it by a defence treaty. Gradually Japan has developed its own modest armed forces, but it has concentrated on re-building its economy and in this respect it has been remarkably successful. It has emerged as the third strongest economic power in the world -- being particularly advanced in modern technology -- with global trading and financial influence.

During the 1980s the ties between Washington and Tokyo stayed close. Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone and his successor, Noboru Takeshita, have maintained close political links with Ronald Reagan and have somewhat expanded the Japanese defence forces. Yet, there have also been repeated economic disputes between the two countries. The Japanese have not only become the US's major trading competitor in the world, but have also made significant inroads into the American markets. As has been the case with the American-Western European economic disputes, however, the American-Japanese frictions have been smoothed over, so far by mutual concessions, although one day they may culminate in a major dispute.

Yet, economic competition between the United States and Japan is unlikely to adversely affect political cooperation between the two countries. In view of the widespread resentment of their aggressive trading practices, the Japanese probably will have to mitigate them somewhat, and by doing so they will become more closely integrated with the West. At the same time Japan's economic strength will give it an even stronger voice in the western alliance -- as since 1975 has been institutionalized by Japan's participation in the annual summits of the seven leading Western industrial powers -- and in the world at large. Yet, Japan has no ambition to become a major world power and intends to continue to rely on the US for protection from the USSR. The Japanese have little liking for the Russians, whom they fought in 1904-05, and they are resentful of the Soviet annexation of the Kurile islands in 1945. Should, however, the present more moderate line in Soviet foreign policy continue, relations between the two countries, especially in the economic sphere, may improve.

In the 1980s relations between the United States and their other partners in the Pacific Rim -- and especially with the Republic of Korea, where the Americans maintain a small military force -- have stayed close. But there have been changes too. South Korea and Taiwan have made important economic strides, and both of them, as well as the Philippines, have been moving away from dictatorship towards democracy. Although this process has been difficult and may yet be reversed, their ultimate embracing of democratic systems is going to consolidate their links with the West. In the mid-1980s the United States had a minor dispute with New Zealand over its refusal to grant port facilities to American ships carrying nuclear weapons. In reprisal, the US withdrew its military protection from New Zealand, but in view of the remote geographical position of that country, that has been largely a symbolic gesture.

The Soviet system of alliances in the Far East and Southeast Asia has also developed -- though more gradually -- as Communist revolutions took place in the different countries in the region. Yet, despite the common ideological bonds it has been unstable -- marred by disputes and even military conflicts. Outer Mongolia became the first Soviet satellite in 1921 and has remained one -- with even less autonomy than the Eastern European Communist states -- ever since. The North Korean Communist regime was established by the occupying Soviet troops after World War II, but after the Korean War -- balancing between Moscow and Beijing -- North Korea reasserted its independence. Following the Communist revolution in that country in 1949 China entered into close alliance with the USSR, but in the 1960s the two Communist giants split bitterly. In 1953 North Vietnam joined the Communist bloc and in 1975 it expanded by conquering the South. At the same time Laos and Kampuchea became communist states, although until the Vietnamese invasion in 1979 the latter maintained close ties with China rather than the USSR.

The pivotal Communist state in the area, of course, is China. Throughout the 1970s it remained adamantly anti-Soviet. To protect its position it developed good relations with the West, and especially the United States. Indeed, at the end of the decade it appeared that Beijing and Washington were close to forging a military alliance. The Chinese were highly critical of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and in 1980 -- in response to the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea -- they briefly attacked Vietnam.

After the consolidation in power of Deng Xiaoping, China launched a major programme of economic reforms. The Soviet-like system of rigid centralized economic planning and management was abandoned -- private ownership was restored in agriculture and in small-scale industry. These reforms have been quite successful -- they have contributed to an increasing economic growth and an improved standard of living. They were accompanied by a more relaxed political atmosphere, but with the Communist party retaining its overall authority. When at the end of 1986 student demonstrations demanding extension of democracy took place, they were firmly suppressed. The occasion was used by the opponents of change to oust the general secretary of the Communist party, Hu Yaobang. Yet his successor, Zhao Ziyang, has stayed along the course of moderate reforms.

The odds are that in fits and starts the progress of economic, and even moderate political reforms in China will continue. For this is the best way to avoid any new dramatic social upheavals, such as the Great Cultural Revolution from the late 1960s -- the memories of which still haunt the Chinese, and to lead the country beyond the threshold of modernization. Yet, in a still largely underdeveloped country with a population of over 1 billion people, the progress in this direction is bound to be slow. Thus, with the largest standing army in the world and with a small nuclear arsenal of its own, China is the most important power in the Far East; but at least for the rest of this century, and probably even well into the 21st, it is unlikely to be anything more than that.

The Chinese leaders seem to be aware of this. Their attention is focussed mainly upon internal affairs and they avoid external entanglements. In this respect in the 1980s there has been a marked shift in China's foreign policy. From being a country with close, friendly ties to the United States it has moved closer to a non-aligned position in East-West relations. In the early stages of the Reagan administration -- because of the traditionally close ties of the right-wing Republicans to Taiwan -- Sino-American relations temporarily cooled off; they have subsequently improved but the cordiality which had characterized them during the Carter administration is largely gone. China's relations with the Soviet bloc have gradually improved. Friendly ties between Beijing and the different Eastern European Communist regimes have been restored. Contacts with the USSR have proceeded at a slower pace -- the Soviet's continued military presence in Afghanistan being the main bone of contention -- but in recent years they too have been expanded. There is no prospect of restoring the Sino-Soviet alliance, formally renounced by

Beijing in 1980. In fact, China's non-aligned stance is closer to the West than to the Soviet bloc. This, however, does not stem from any sympathy for democracy, which is still being categorically repudiated by the Chinese leaders, but rather from a practical recognition that the West could be more helpful than the Soviet Union in their efforts to modernize the country.

Its alliance with China terminated, the USSR commands marginal influence in the Pacific Rim. It is closely aligned with the three Indochinese states dominated by Vietnam. Yet, the continued Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea -- with an ongoing insurgency there -- stands in the way of improving Soviet-Chinese relations. With their economies in shambles, moreover, the three Indochinese states are costly client-states. In 1986, apparently after Soviet prodding, the Vietnamese rejuvenated their leadership and undertook some reforms to decentralize their economic system. Soviet relations with North Korea are even more difficult. Ruled by seventy-five year old Kim Il-Sung, the country still follows a Stalinist system at home and an equally rigid ideological line in foreign policy. Yet, it is possible that after Kim's demise, encouraged by the examples of both the USSR and China, North Korea will also move along the path of modernization.

In comparison with the past decades when cruel wars raged in Indochina and Korea, the 1980s have been a relatively peaceful period in the region. The conflict in Kampuchea could feasibly be resolved by negotiations -- which in fact are sporadically conducted -- to provide for a coalition government in Phnom Penh acceptable to all sides. And another attack by North Korea against the South is unlikely -- for in the present international climate neither the USSR nor China would support it. In fact, relations between the states formerly belonging to the two opposed alliances have been slowly, but steadily, improving. As in Europe, their different ideological persuasions are not going to disappear, but they are likely to be gradually overlaid with growing bonds of international cooperation.

Any major re-alignment in the region is improbable. The only shift which could possibly make a difference on a global scale would be a Japanese-Chinese alliance -- combining the former's know-how and the latter's population. Yet this is clearly not in the cards. There is a lingering hostility between these two nations going back at least to the Japanese invasion of China in the 1930s; the two countries are also at different levels of development and are divided by different political systems. The other most populous nation in the region, Indonesia, is still too preoccupied with its internal problems to assume a major role in the international sphere. Thus, for the rest of the century, and into the next, the most likely developments in the area would involve the various countries there-- one by one and each in its own specific way--moving along the road of modernization and becoming a part of the broader international system. This could be facilitated by the progress of détente between the two superpowers. From Alaska and Kamchatka in the north, along the Pacific Rim, all the way to Australia and New Zealand, the European outposts in the South Pacific, the region could eventually be absorbed into an emerging "Greater Europe."

The Third World

In the 1950s the United States tried to link their defensive arrangements in Europe and in the Pacific region by preventing the Soviet Union and China from spreading their influence in South Asia. The Baghdad Pact, later called the Central Treaty Organization, and the South East Asia Treaty Organization stretched from Turkey to Vietnam. There was a loophole in India and Burma both of which chose to stay non-aligned. The USSR not only tried to penetrate this belt, but also, by leapfrogging it, strove to establish links with various countries in the Third World located beyond it. These were not necessarily states ruled by leftist regimes, but included some -- even a few that were ideologically opposed to Communism such as at one time Egypt and India -- which for geopolitical reasons opted for Moscow rather than Washington.

Many Third World countries found cooperation with either one or the other superpower attractive. This way they could obtain economic and military aid and enhance their international status. The East-West rivalry was often for them of secondary importance. In aligning themselves with either the US or the USSR, they were primarily concerned with advancing their own national goals. Thus, the danger arose that the two superpowers could be drawn into a confrontation over some local conflict between their respective junior partners. The inconsistency between the interests of the leaders of the two alliances and those of their partners in the Third World has led to an inherent instability in the security systems there -- further aggravated by the chronic changes of governments in many developing countries.

Both superpowers, thus, have found many of their partners in the Third World unreliable. The American system of alliances in south Asia has effectively disintegrated. Particularly humiliating for the United States was the loss of Iran in 1979, following the fundamentalist Islamic revolution there. The Soviet Union, however, has also suffered painful reversals -- such as in Indonesia in 1965 and Egypt in 1973. As a result no coherent systems of alliances -- like the ones which predominate in the North -- exist today in the South. Instead there is a checkered pattern of alignments linking each superpower to various client-states scattered throughout the Third World.

Yet, even sporadic involvement by both superpowers in various regional conflicts in the South aggravates their rivalry and threatens to escalate into a major confrontation between them. There are at present several local conflicts in the South where the interests of the East and the West clash; though none of them appears to be beyond control by a joint action of the two superpowers.

Potentially the most dangerous situation exists in the Middle East, for the conflict there is immensely complex. The United States is on the one hand aligned to Israel and on the other hand to several Arab states, notably Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia -- the two sides being at loggerheads over the unresolved Palestinian issue. The Soviet Union supports Syria and Iraq who, once again, are enemies. There is a continued imbroglio in Lebanaon, where the Syrian and Israeli interests clash. Iran is the wild card, following its own course and by now having been engaged for over seven years in a war with Iraq. Recently Iran, as a reprisal for Kuwait's support of Iraq, has threatened to disrupt Kuwait's shipments of oil through the Persian Gulf. In reponse the United States has re-flagged some of the Kuwaiti tankers and has sent a formidable naval force to protect them, clashing with the Iranians. The whole region is a maze of cross-currents where various conflicts overlap, making them extremely difficult to disentangle.

In the early 1970s the United States and the Soviet Union cooperated in promoting international negotiations to find a solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict. With Egypt shifting from the Soviet to the American side in 1973 -- and with Iran still being firmly aligned to the US -- the Americans thought that they could handle the situation in the Middle East on their own and initially had some successes in doing so. The diplomatic efforts of Henry Kissinger and Jimmy Carter helped to bring the conflict between Israel and Egypt to an end in 1978. This was supposed to be followed by broader Arab-Israeli negotiations over the Palestinian question and in 1983 Ronald Reagan announced his intention to get these under way. Yet, after the fiasco of their intervention in Lebanon in 1983, the Americans seemed to lose their sense of direction in the region and the Reagan plan was shelved. At the same time both superpowers remained impervious to the cruel Iraq-Iran war. The Soviet ally Syria supported Iran, while the US allies, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, supported Iraq. The Americans secretly sold arms to Iran.

It was only in 1986 that some new diplomatic initiatives were undertaken. With American encouragement Israeli prime minister Shimon Peres and Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak held talks. They reached no agreement over the intractable Palestinian problem, but they did call for an international conference on the Middle East. Soon afterwards Peres met in New York with the Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze. Since Peres stepped down as the Israeli prime minister the initiative has been stalled by his successor Yitzak Shamir, but contacts between Israel and the USSR as well as consultations between the two superpowers over the Middle East have continued. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union has also showed interest in helping to terminate the Iraq-Iran war. In mid-1987 it voted in favour of a UN Security Council resolution affirming freedom of navigation in the Persian Gulf and urging Baghdad and Teheran to stop fighting. Growing cooperation between the two superpowers in the region is of pivotal significance. For only by acting in unison, each holding back its own client states, can the superpowers maintain peace there. Given the very complex nature of Middle East politics progress is going to be slow, but this way at least a major explosion could be averted and some problems eventually resolved.

In South Asia the Soviet Union leans towards India and the United States towards Pakistan. Both of these two local rivals conduct largely independent policies and only in extreme circumstances -- as during their wars in 1965 and 1973 -- do they call upon the superpowers for support. Pakistan is important to the US as a venue for its assistance to the Mujahideen in Afghanistan. Should a solution be found to the Afghan problem providing for the withdrawal of the Soviet troops, American interest in the region would be considerably reduced. Formal negotiations to accomplish this goal are at present being conducted under the UN aegis, but they are also a subject of direct consultations between the two superpowers.

The Soviet Union maintains close relations with the two leftist regimes in Ethiopia and South Yemen. Neither is a shining example of successful socialism. Ethiopia underwent a disastrous famine in 1985; and a bloody power struggle between two Marxist factions took place in South Yemen in 1986. Soviet influence in that area is balanced by the American influence in Egypt and Somalia -- which, incidentally, until 1977 relied on the USSR. In southern Africa the continued presence of Cuban troops in Angola is resented by the United States, which in response has been supporting the insurgents there and has withheld its support for granting independence to neighbouring Namibia. Potentially the most dangerous problem, however, is the struggle by the majority black population against apartheid in the Republic of South Africa. Should the growing unrest against white rule take a violent form -- as at one stage or another is almost certain to happen -- and especially should the neighbouring black states become involved in this conflict, the region would be ripe for outside intervention. But such a development can still be averted by a concerted pressure of the western democracies upon South Africa to dismantle its abhorrent system of racial discrimination.

In the 1980s much attention -- largely because it has been the central focus of the Reagan doctrine -- has been given to the Caribbean Basin and especially to Central America. Yet, in East-West conflicts that region is not really very important. Because of the region's close geographic and historical bonds with the United States, the Soviet Union has in effect accepted the American predominance there. The only exception is the Marxist regime in Cuba, to which the US agreed by pledging not to try to overwhelm the Communists there in 1962. The USSR has not responded in any significant way to the American invasion of Grenada. It has also shown distinct restraint in its dealings with the Sandinista government in Nicaragua -- Moscow's cutting down of oil supplies to Managua being the most recent example of this attitude. Without direct Soviet involvement it seems that the other American objective in Nicaragua, namely to prevent it from adopting a full-fledged Marxist regime and spreading its revolution to other Central American countries, could be achieved through diplomatic means. Both the Contadora plan and the peace proposal advanced lately by President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica provide practical prescriptions in this regard. So far the Reagan administration has been lukewarm towards the Arias plan and may continue supporting the Contras' rebellion; but there exists a considerable opposition in the US against this course so the next administration may be more amenable to seeking a peaceful solution in Nicaragua.

Even if current conflicts in the South were resolved, no doubt new ones would arise in the future. Immense economic and social problems in the developing countries would breed political instability and revolutionary upheavals, often spilling over into the international sphere. Disputes among states operating within the traditional context of international politics, without the restraining effects of nuclear deterrence, would tend to push them towards war. These conflicts would provide ample opportunities for the two superpowers to continue their interventions in the Third World. Yet, it seems that both Moscow and Washington are increasingly aware of the dangers of doing so. The more acute a local conflict is -- and the more it threatens to bring about a direct confrontation between the two superpowers -- the more cautious they are of getting involved in it. This way, indirectly, the restraining effects of the nuclear stalemate in the North are gradually being transferred to the South.

North-South Divide

There are forces working in a similar direction in the Third World. The non-aligned movement, composed almost exclusively of the developing countries, rejects involvement in the East-West conflict. It regards the rivalry among the developed nations -- in a way that curiously recalls the idea of a "Greater Europe" -- as not their own affair. The non-aligned nations tend to see as the most important divide in the contemporary world that between the poor South and the rich North. Their primary concern is to overcome this gap through rapid economic progress by the developing countries. In these endeavours they expect substantial help from the developed nations.

The influence of the non-aligned movement, however, is restricted. Since its inception in 1961 its membership has grown to almost 100. But most are small and poor countries. Even the most influential, such as India, Nigeria or Argentina, are unlikely to emerge soon as significant powers on a global scale. Their ranks, moreover, are divided between the states which are distinctly pro-Soviet, such as Cuba, or

Vietnam, and those which are pro-American, such as Egypt or Pakistan. They are torn apart by local disputes, such as those between Iraq and Iran, Somalia and Ethiopia or Algeria and Morocco. Yet, the existence of the non-aligned movement is not without some significance in the international sphere. It reminds the two superpowers and their allies that they are not alone and impresses upon them the urgency of rendering assistance to the poorer peoples.

Taking advantage of their numerical strength in the United Nations Organization in the 1960s and the 1970s -- which were consecutively labelled as the decades of development -- the Third World countries pressed for increased economic aid to themselves. In 1974, they demanded the adoption of a New International Economic Order providing for massive redistribution of wealth from the North to the South. The developing countries attributed their poverty to their colonial past and regarded economic aid as compensation for this. Such an ideological approach, however, proved to be counter-productive. It enabled the Soviet Union, claiming that it had not participated in the colonial exploitation, to shift the entire responsibility to the West. It made the United States increasingly distance itself from the UN activities. The reluctance of the western countries to rush in with economic aid was further aggravated by numerous examples of developing countries' squandering, by inefficiency or corruption, the aid that did come.

The needs of the Third World are immense. About one billion people there live below the poverty line; they have no access to adequate housing, medical or educational facilities. Yet, assistance by the rich North to the poor South -- as the reports prepared by commissions headed by Lester Pearson in 1969 and then by Willy Brandt in 1979 emphasized -- is not just a moral obligation; it is both politically and economically expedient. The extreme poverty in the Third World breeds social unrest and revolutionary upheavals, often with important international consequences. The continued prosperity of the North largely depends upon economic progress in the South. These two world regions are linked together by many trading and financial ties -- notably the massive debt of the developing countries to the West, which in 1986 reached US $750 billion -- which can be handled only jointly by mutual cooperation between them.

In order to overcome those problems the Brandt report recommended that developmental funds and economic aid to the Third World be considerably increased -- as a target it suggested that by 1990 the developed countries should set aside one percent of their GNP for that purpose. As a first step in this direction it called for global negotiations at the highest level among the leading developed and developing countries as soon as possible. Such a summit was in fact held in Cancun, Mexico in the autumn of 1981, but it produced little result. The Soviet Union simply boycotted it. The United States did participate, but declined to accept any new obligations to expand aid to the Third World. Since that time the two superpowers have continued to offer assistance to their respective client-states, but the global negotiations have remained stalled. It is clear that by 1990 not a single developed country will reach the level of aid proposed by the Brandt commission.

The stringent attitude of the North has had sobering effects in the South. There has been marked disillusionment with the USSR, resulting in a decline of the influence of its supporters in the non-aligned ranks. The former ideological colouration against the West has been moderated. The new mood was evident at the UN Conference on Trade and Development held in Geneva in 1987. Demands for a drastic reorganization of the global economic system were conspicuously absent; instead the poorer countries showed themselves to be more amenable to working within the traditional UN agencies such as the World Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). They abandoned the confrontationist stance over their debts and adopted a more conciliatory attitude towards their northern creditors.

The Brandt report also pointed out an interdependence between the resolution of the East-West and the North-South problems. It stressed that progress in arms control and disarmament, by reducing military expenditures, would release substantial funds which could be used for assistance to the developing countries. At the recent UN conference in New York this relationship was re-emphasized. In 1987 the global military expenditures amounted to US $1 trillion while aid to the Third World came to only US $50 billion. The two superpowers, which are the largest spenders on armaments, are also the most important potential contributors of new funds for assistance to the developing countries.

Yet, even if the USSR and the US do succeed in agreeing upon major arms control and disarmament measures, it is unlikely that dramatic increases of economic aid to the Third World would result. The Soviets would probably invest the bulk of the funds so released into their own ailing economy: and the Americans naturally would use them to reduce their mounting deficits. There is simply no panacea to overcome all at once the poverty in the South.

Nonetheless, relaxation of tensions between the two superpowers and their allies would certainly be conducive to offering more substantial and systematic help to the developing countries. Under Gorbachev the Soviet Union has shown interest in cooperating with the World Bank and the IMF.

After the term of the Reagan administration is over, the United States may once again warm up towards the UN. For in the modern world there is an increasing interdependence between the East-West and the North-South issues. The progress of détente in the North is helpful to the resolution of problems in the South; and, conversely, the greater the stability in the Third World, the more conducive climate for the improvement of relations between the two great alliances in a "Greater Europe." These two goals, thus, should be pursued simultaneously.

From Détente to Entente?

The progress of East-West détente has been slow and arduous. It has had its ups and downs, and while the current phase seems promising, there is no assurance that it will so continue. This is hardly surprising. To mitigate a rivalry between two alliances, global in their scope and armed with weapons unprecedented in their destructive power, and, moreover, placed in a rapidly changing world, is an enormously complex task. It calls for intellectual rigour of high order, great diplomatic skills, and simple human perserverance. It requires a public opinion alerted and well informed about the dangers which we face. Above all, it demands a calm and judicious attitude -- no matter how severely tested -- from the political leaders on both sides.

In such circumstances there is little reason to expect that the road ahead of us will be any smoother. It is unrealistic to expect that before the end of this century the two antagonistic blocs will move beyond détente, even if they stay on their present course, into entente. More likely relations between them will contain elements of both conflict and cooperation. What is essential, however, is that the former should be gradually reduced and the latter expanded. This way, even if détente is not totally superseded by entente, we will move in the latter direction. Graphically it could be presented like this:

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Entente ____________________  __________________ the Cold War
                           Détente
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So far détente has been primarily induced by negative factors. Its progress has been embedded in the existing balance of power between the two superpowers and their reckoning that a nuclear conflict would be tantamount to their mutual destruction. To avoid this they have tried to mitigate at least the most dangerous tensions between them -- either directly as in the arms race, or indirectly as in some regional conflicts. This, however, has not been transformed into a true cooperation, for below the nuclear threshold more often than not the US and the USSR have continued their rivalry.

Yet, there have been some nascent elements of entente in East-West relations too. In a modern, increasingly interdependent world there are many areas where international cooperation is beneficial to both sides. Some such ties were developed in the past, especially during the period of détente in the 1970s. At that time cultural and scientific relations were considerably accelerated. Trade between the members of the two blocs, especially in Europe, was expanded. Within the CSCE framework attention was given to common environmental dangers. The US and the USSR even undertook joint space exploration -- culminating in the linking of the Apollo and Soyuz spaceships in 1975.

The new phase of détente could, and should, be used to cultivate the positive bonds of cooperation and to establish new ones. The efforts by most of the Communist states to modernize their economic systems should provide opportunities further to expand East-West trading relations. Their adoption, at least partially, of market mechanisms should also facilitate this goal. The US-USSR pact of 1972 could be revived in a new form. At the same time the technological revolution in the West makes cooperation with it even more imperative for the Communist countries. In carrying out their reforms they could greatly profit by adoption of western production methods as well as modern managerial techniques.

Economic relations, however, should be expanded not only on a bilateral basis, but also by deliberately drawing other members of the Communist bloc into the world economy.[16] Some Eastern European states are already members of the World Bank and the IMF, and the Soviet Union's recent interest in these specialized agencies should be encouraged. Participation of the Communist countries in the Uruguay phase of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs, aimed to combat rising protectionism and to liberalize international trade, would have been useful. Incorporation of these countries could help to avoid a global recession and to stimulate economic growth on both sides. In the long run it would be logical to invite the USSR, and then also China, into the cooperative framework of the seven major western industrial powers.

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[16] In his book Gorbachev stresses strongly the significance of economic relations between the two superpowers as a means of improving their political relations. "Perestroika...," op.cit., Chapter 7.

In today's world there are more and more areas, with new ones arising all the time, where East-West cooperation is simply a necessity. In 1987 the world population passed the five billion mark. To ease the demographic pressure upon limited resources -- especially in the poor South -- requires systematic planning and efforts on a global scale. The world health problems have been recently intensified by the use of drugs and the spread of AIDS, which can be curbed only by joint international action.

No less urgent--as the 1987 report by the UN commission headed by the Norwegian prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland emphasized--are the international environmental problems. In the 1990s more natural disasters will be caused by industrial pollution. Major changes are occurring in the soils and waters which will produce droughts and floods. Indeed chemical acids even threaten the global ozone layer. The Chernobyl accident in 1986 dramatically illustrated the undeniable need for international cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

There are many other problems where East-West cooperation would be beneficial not only to the two sides, but to the world at large. Development of the Arctic regions is one. Each side could benefit from the other's experience. Joint economic ventures in the Third World -- helping the developing countries and at the same time strengthening links between the developed ones across their political divide -- is another. Rather than preparing for Star Wars the two superpowers should revive their common efforts, together with the other countries pioneering in it, at space exploration.

Under the coordinated leadership of the US and the USSR the United Nations Organization could be made to pursue more effectively its original goals to maintain peace and to resolve local disputes. At the same time it could cope more energetically with other world problems. After a marked decline in the late 1970s and the early 1980s there seems to be now a somewhat greater interest in the UN's activities. Fresh ideas as to how this world body could be re-activated are being advanced. Influential American public figures have recently suggested that parallel to the Security Council, a 'global watch' body composed of the leading 25 nations be established to oversee such crises as major diseases, natural disasters or rising debts. On the Soviet side Mikhail Gorbachev has called for forming a 'brain trust' composed of the leading intellectuals in the world to advise the General Assembly on how to restrict the arms race and advance détente.

East-West intellectual contacts should be further invigorated. They should be deliberately used to overcome the East-West ideological divide and to search for new ideas as to how, in a modern world, the two sides can be brought closer together. These should be realistic, respecting the different historical traditions and the contemporary idiosyncracies of various nations; yet they should also systematically promote the gradual emergence of a global mentality. Each step should be designed not only to achieve its own end, but should logically lead towards the next one. Each stage should serve to cultivate the habit of international cooperation, yet ultimately should strive at structuring a new world order fitting the contemporary era.

For some time to come the two superpowers will continue to play paramount roles in these endeavours. Yet already international politics is more complex than can be reduced to just US-USSR relations. We are all -- in East and West, North and South -- responsible for the future of our planet. It is within our power to destroy it, but we also have the means at our disposal to develop it beyond the boldest dreams of our forefathers. The dream of a "Greater Europe" stretching not only eastward from Alaska to Kamchatka, but also from the Barents Sea to the Cape of Good Hope -- ultimately embracing the whole world -- is now within our reach.

Canada's Role in the Contemporary World

Canada is a relative newcomer on the international scene -- its entry more or less coincided with the rise, in the wake of World War II, of a bipolar system. Since that time, however, it has been a unique, and often noted, actor in world affairs. Canada, of coure, has not been a great power but its influence has compared very favourably with that of most of the other states. During the war its international status was enhanced by its substantial contribution to the allied victory and the fact that its economy not only remained intact but made considerable progress.

The main reason for Canada's unique position in the international sphere is the size of its territory -- which makes it the second largest country in the world -- and its strategic location. Canada shares the North America continent with the United States and stretches from the Atlantic to the Pacific, while across the North Pole it is a neighbour of the Soviet Union. As such it is a crucial element of a "Greater Europe" bridging Europe and Asia as well as the US and the USSR. The country, moreover, is generously endowed with natural resources. In the post-war period its economy, and its trade, has continued to grow. It is now ranked seventh among the leading western industrial powers.

Canada's international influence, however, is restricted by its relatively small population of 25 million people. The heterogeneity of Canadians when internal friction among them ensues -- as it did during the rise of separatism in Quebec in the 1970s -- can also adversely affect their standing in the world. Yet, when Canadians are united the bilingual and multicultural character of their nation can be a major asset -- it can help them adopt a genuine internationalist outlook conducive to effective diplomacy.

The main directions of Canada's foreign policy were evolved in the 1940s and they have remained relatively stable.[17] When the Cold War arose Canadians had little difficulty in deciding which side to take. They were deeply committed to democracy and communism had very few supporters among them. The country's close ties to the United States and Western Europe, which the Canadians had helped to defend during both world wars, pushed them along the same lines. Canada, thus, willingly joined the US in the North American Aerospace Defence (NORAD) Command, and became one of the founding members of the Atlantic Alliance. Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs Louis St. Laurent was one of its chief proponents.

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[17] For discussion of Canada's foreign policy at greater depth see: Adam Bromke and Kim R. Nossal, "Tensions in Canada's Foreign Policy," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 62, No. 2, Winter 1983/84; and "A Turning Point in U.S.-Canadian Relations," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 66, No. 1, Fall 1987.

Yet, Canadians -- perhaps due to the stronger influence of the European traditions among them -- generally took less ideological and more pragmatic positions in the East-West confrontation than the Americans did, and from the outset tried to mitigate the latter's response. When the Cold War subsided somewhat in 1955 Lester Pearson was the first NATO foreign minister to visit the Soviet Union to explore ways of reducing international tensions. In the 1960s Canada strongly supported NATO's adoption of the "dual track" approach to the USSR -- combining military strength with diplomatic flexibility. It also welcomed the first arms control accords; the Limited Test Ban Treaty and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Canada's growing concern about regional conflicts escalating into major international confrontations prompted Pearson's successful efforts to defuse the Suez crisis in 1956, as well as the country's participation in other peacekeeping operations. The Canadian government condemned the Soviet invasions of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, but it was also sometimes critical of the American intervention in the Vietnam war.

In the early 1970s Canada was actively involved in promoting East-West détente. With the rise of long-range missiles -- which made the country's location between the two superpowers even more precarious -- it warmly endorsed the conclusion of the SALT I agreement and the ABM Treaty. Canada also participated in reducing tensions in Europe -- it joined both the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the Mutual Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) negotiations. These were accompanied by a steady expansion of Canada's diplomatic and economic ties with various Eastern European states. During the same period Canadian-Soviet relations also improved -- the two prime ministers for the first time exchanged visits. With the decline of détente in the second half of the decade there was evident concern among Canadians. The Soviets' 1979 invasion of Afghanistan was especially a shock to them and evoked a strong condemnation from Ottawa.

The main thrust of Canadian foreign policy has continued basically unchanged in the 1980s. The country remained a close ally of the United States and a loyal member of NATO, but at the same time it has persisted in its efforts to mitigate East-West tensions. During the crisis in Poland in 1980-81 Canada took a calmer view -- closer to that of most of the Western European countries -- than did the United States. After the Reagan administration came to power in Washington its sharp anti-Soviet rethoric produced visible apprehension of the part of the Liberal government in Ottawa. In 1983 when East-West tensions reached a new peak Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau undertook his "peace mission," trying to persuade the nuclear powers to go back to the negotiating table. His efforts, if only because they received no support from the US, produced no tangible effects in the international sphere, but they evoked broad support at home, significantly including both opposition parties.

The change of government in Ottawa in 1984 marked more a new style than a new substance in Canada's foreign policy. The Conservatives, led by Brian Mulroney, have been more effusive in stressing Canada's close bonds with the United States, but in East-West relations they have largely continued the moderate course of their predecessors. In 1985 an agreement between its two partners to modernize the North American Aerospace Defence (NORAD) Command was reached, but in the same year Ottawa declined Washington's invitation to participate in the development of SDI. The Canadian government repeatedly pleaded with both superpowers to adhere informally to the SALT II Treaty provisions and to observe strictly the terms of the ABM Treaty. Needless to add in 1985 it greeted warmly the resumption of the nuclear arms control and disarmament talks between the US and the USSR in Geneva.

The thawing of US-USSR relations in the second half of the 1980s has been well received by Canadians. The successive summit meetings between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev have been hailed by both the Canadian government and the public. Although Ottawa has deliberately adopted a low-key posture over the elimination of medium- and shorter-range missiles -- regarding this as a matter of primary concern for the Americans and the Europeans -- it welcomed the signing of this accord in 1987. No doubt, the proposed agreement between two superpowers to reduce their long-range missiles by 50 percent -- which is of a direct strategic interest to Canada -- would receive no less enthusiastic support by Ottawa. Meanwhile, Canadian diplomats have actively participated in the various CSCE fora, and especially in the Stockholm conference elaborating and expanding the confidence-building measures.

In the mid-1980s, after their decline in the wake of the invasion of Afghanistan, Canadian-Soviet relations improved again. The two foreign ministers exchanged visits and cultural contacts between the two countries have been restored. The recent Soviet proposals to restrict military activity in the Arctic and to expand cooperation in developing that region are of a great interest to Canadians. An agreement along these lines would not only diminish a major threat to Canada, but could also be helpful to it in asserting its sovereignty in the north. Furthermore, it could enhance Canada's international status for in any negotiations over the Arctic the country, alongside the two superpowers, would naturally play a major role.

Canada, significantly, has adopted a more moderate stand than the United States over several regional conflicts. In the Middle East, while maintaining friendly relations with Israel, Ottawa has been attentive to the fate of the Palestinians and has advocated trying to achieve a resolution of this problem through international negotiations. In Central America Canada has refused to follow the US lead in imposing sanctions against Nicaragua and, in fact, has continued modest developmental assistance to that country. The Canadian government has been openly critical of the Reagan administration's military assistance to the Contras, and, instead, has supported the Contadora and Arias peace initiatives. The two American neighbours also differed sharply in their policies towards South Africa. While President Reagan -- even after suffering a defeat on this issue at the hands of Congress -- has disavowed the use of sanctions as a means to pressure Pretoria to dismantle apartheid, Prime Minister Mulroney has followed exactly the opposite course. He has advocated adoption of sanctions against South Africa at various international fora, especially by taking the lead over this issue in the Commonwealth.

Sharing the continent with the United States enhances Canada's role in the international sphere in several respects. It offers Canada security from any outside attack and through extensive trade -- the two countries being each other's largest partners -- it contributes to Canada's economic progress and prosperity. Recently Ottawa and Washington signed a pact which, if ratified, would gradually remove the remaining trading barriers and bring the two economies even closer together. Yet, in some respects close proximity to the US also restricts Canada's influence in bilateral relations with its powerful neighbour and in the world at large. After the chill between Trudeau and Reagan, with the Conservatives coming to power in Ottawa in 1984, relations with Washington have warmed up. The Canadian prime minister and the American president have held regular annual summits and the climate has generally been cordial. Still, Mulroney has been unable to prevail upon Reagan to control acid rain coming from the US and polluting eastern Canada's waters and forests, or to make the US recognize Canada's sovereignty over the Northwest Passage. There is also little reason to believe that the views of the Canadian Conservative government over some world issues -- except when they have been shared by some more influential members of the Western Alliance -- have carried great weight with the Reagan administration.

In NATO, because of its long involvement, as well as the high calibre of its diplomacy, Canada enjoys considerable prestige. Owing to its unique location, however, it also suffers from some handicaps. Most of the Western European members of the alliance belong to the European Community (EC), and, as such, they often consult each other before taking into account Canada's views. Also, militarily Britain and France, the nuclear powers, as well as West Germany, with its strong conventional forces, naturally carry more weight than does Canada. Furthermore, there have been some major differences between Canada and some of its European partners: Britain and West Germany have joined in cooperation with the US in developing the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and both of them have refused to apply sanctions against South Africa. Moreover, Canada's relations with France were damaged by France's support of separatism in Quebec in the late 1960s, and they have improved somewhat only in the mid-1980s. Yet, there is no question that participation in NATO is an extremely important element of Canadian diplomacy. It provides Canada with access to the West's major councils determining its relations with the East, and moreover, provides Ottawa with a multilateral forum for impressing its views upon Washington. Also, at the price of keeping a modest garrison in West Germany, it secures Canada a seat at the negotiating table in the CSCE and the MBFR.

The successive Canadian governments have also made special efforts to develop relations with the countries in the Pacific Rim. Canada's bonds with Japan, especially in the economic realm, have been steadily strengthened. Since the early 1970s, although Canada's exports have consisted mostly of natural resources, Japan has emerged as its second most important trading partner. In South Korea the Canadian contribution to the defence of that country in 1950-53 is still warmly remembered, and the two countries have gradually forged closer economic links. Canada established diplomatic relations with China ahead of the US in 1971. Since that time relations between the two countries, particularly in the scientific and cultural spheres, have been good. More recently Canada has also paid increasing attention to developing closer contacts with the various countries in South East Asia. Canada's role in the Pacific Rim, of course, is grossly overshadowed by that of the US, but it is increasingly recognized as an important player there.

Canada's foreign policy is not exclusively confined to the East-West framework -- although in the country's position this clearly has a priority -- but also operates in the North-South context. Historically Canada became involved in this issue through its membership first in the Commonwealth, and then in La Francophonie. Ottawa had deliberately used these two channels to enhance its influence in the Third World. By now it is generally recognized as the most important country in the Commonwealth next to Britain -- its strong condemnation of apartheid in South Africa further enhancing its prestige-- and the second next to France in La Francophonie -- symbolically, both of these organizations held their summits in 1987 in Canada.

Yet, Canada's interest in the Third World stems not only from its historical ties, but also from its genuine commitment to internationalism. A considerable and growing segment of the Canadian population has roots in those countries. Canadians of European background, however, have also shown themselves to be sensitive to the poverty of the South. In 1969, when he retired as prime minister, Lester Pearson prepared a report on North-South relations in which he strongly advocated increased aid from the developed countries to the developing ones. Canada has partially lived up to the expectations that it helped to raise -- its current aid to the developing countries amounts to $2.5 billion, close to 0.5 percent of its gross national product.

Canada has also been a faithful adherent to the United Nations Organization. It has supported various UN disarmament initiatives -- most recently the negotiations aimed to eliminate chemical weapons. It has steadfastly upheld the UN efforts to resolve different regional conflicts -- often by contributing troops for peacekeeping operations. Canada, moreover, has demonstrated continuing interest in the United Nations' role in promoting assistance to the Third World, and in 1987 took an active part in the Conference on Disarmament and Development. While the Reagan administration has shown diminishing interest in the UN, the Canadian government (both under the Liberals and the Conservatives) has remained a firm advocate of this world body, and, indeed, has urged the Americans to support it as well.

Canada is not a great power and the impact of its efforts in the international sphere must not be exaggerated. Yet, it is certainly not an insignificant country. It can make, if it preserves its unity and musters all its resources -- material as well as intellectual -- a substantial contribution in determining the course of international affairs.[18] It occupies a crucial strategic position in the East-West conflict, and it is also deeply involved -- which only enhances its role in the former -- in the North-South relations. As such Canada could perform a role to which it is geographically and historically well suited, namely, to promote the spread of modernization and internationalism throughout "Greater Europe" -- conceived not only as stretching from Alaska eastward to Kamchatka, but ultimately as embracing the world as a whole.

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[18] For an up-to-date assessment of Canada's policies in East-West context see: Geoffrey Pearson, "Review of Peace and Security Issues in 1987 and the Canadian Response," Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security, January 1988.

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